

1. My words this morning are addressed to the ladies in this congregation, and they concern the immortal ideals of Jewish womanhood. My choice of this topic is, frankly, a result of the growing influence of woman in determining the religious life of her family. Her rise in business and in politics has been paralleled by in religion. Only recently in a discussion held in the parlor of one of our people here today, the opinion of the men was that if they were to move to a new city, that by and large their choice of a synagogue would be motivated not by their religious principles but by the choice of their wives. It is a most revealing and very real sociological fact: for whatever reason it might be, a great number of our male contemporaries have abdicated their traditional stewardship of the spiritual destinies of their homes, and the burden of religious guidance has devolved upon the women. Whether they use or abuse this new responsibility will determine the future of our people in this country. It is because of my deep concern for the future of Torah and Orthodoxy in America Jewish that I believe it imperative to speak to and about/women on this Holy Day.
2. Of course, there is ample precedence for doing this. When Moses received the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai, G-d commanded him to teach them to the House of Jacob and the House of Israel. And our Rabbis taught that the "House of Jacob" refers to the womenfolk, while "House of Israel" refers to the menfolk. So that Moses' eternal message was directed first to women and only then to the men. A thousand years later a great Rabbi with deep insight anticipated our modern era by saying that ANASHIM HOLCHIN ACHAREI DAATAN SHE' NASHIM (Pirkei D'R. Elazar), that men are wont to follow the opinions of the women.
3. Indeed, the Torah Readings of Rosh Hashannah highlight the role played by women in our sacred history. It is women whose stories permeate this holiday, instructing and exhorting, inspiring and uplifting, teaching us to hope and trust and pray. The resplendent figures of Sarah, Hagar, Rachel and Channah appear before us in their highest womanly dignity.
4. Let us then attempt to restate for today's Jewish women, and in a modern phraseology, the message of our Divine Father as He revealed Himself through the lives of His devoted daughters, the Mothers of Israel.
5. The first thing that must be said of classical Jewish womanhood, and of the kind of persons our modern authentic Jewish woman ought to strive to be, is that strength is their greatest

virtue. Let us ^{do away} ~~explode~~, once and for all, ^{with} the popular ~~myth~~ of her weakness. In the mass mind, womanhood is identified with weakness and frailty. She is regarded as "the weaker sex", and this term is taken to apply to her character and spirit as well lack of physical prowess. Scientists in Genetics and Anthropology are questioning that dogma nowadays. But certainly nothing of the sort is true when we speak of Jewish womanhood as exemplified by the gallant figures of Jewish mothers throughout the ages, ~~and as their modern-day daughters continue their traditions.~~ ^{never} In matters of the spirit, genuine Jewish women have/been weaklings. They have shown strength, endurance and resistance. It is true they have not been marked by hardness; but certainly they have been distinguished by hardi ness, by a strength of character and soul that the Jewish male has often been unable to equal. No wonder King Solomon, when he wrote his immortal tribute to Jewish womanhood and wanted to find just the right epithet for this model Jewess, decided to call her EISHESS CHAYIL, which we translate as "woman of virtue" but which really means "woman of strength". For this wisest of all men correctly understood the distinctive nature of Jewish womanhood: she has strength in her virtue, strength in her modesty, strength in her purity, in her love, in her faith, in her motherliness, strength in her unflinching self-sacrifice.

Only yesterday we read of the controversy between Abraham and his wife Sarah as to whether ~~his~~ son by Hagar, Ishamel, should be ~~allowed~~ to remain under one roof with his son by Sarah, Isaac. It was Abraham who was weak, who knew his duty ^{but} ~~and~~ preferred to evade it under the guise of no discrimination. It was Sarah who showed the strength of character that was necessary to ensure that Isaac would develop to what he was to become - the heir to the blessing and a father of his people. It required a firmness of faith and conviction for her to insist that Ishmael be sent away because otherwise his lust, his instinct for killing and his ~~own~~ paganism would corrupt her Isaac. And so the voice of G-d came to Abraham, "in all that Sarah saith, hearken to her voice." For she is the EISHESS CHAYIL. The first Jewish mother set the pattern of strength in virtue.

From Pharoah to Nietzsche cynics have sneered, saying that religion is for weaklings only.

But long before them, ^{King Solomon coined the term} ~~Mother Sarah, the~~ EISHESS CHAYIL ^{maintaining} of Abraham, ~~had already proven that~~ ^{but which Jewish women possess} real religion and real faith requires a strength which they never dreamed of, ^{in abundance.}

6. And certainly ~~she~~ was right. Physically, the creative act of bringing a child into the world is not a task for weaklings. TZAAR GIDUL BANIM, the untold difficulties of raising a child

of moulding ^{his} ~~the~~ untamed mind and character ~~of a child~~, of teaching him a set of religious values, of bringing him up to know right from wrong - this requires the disciplined character of the woman of strength. ~~When comparing the success of Rebecca in this respect with that of Isaac,~~ ^{in this respect} Our Rabbis pointed out that according to the Torah Man was created of ADAMAH, of earth, while Woman was created of ETZEM, of bone, of Adam's celebrated rib. And, continue our Rabbis, just as an earthen vessel, when dropped, will shatter at once while an article made of bone will show infinitely greater endurance, so is woman more enduring and resistant than man. So it is with Jewish womanhood: there is beauty and there is charm and there is femininity - but her essence is a powerful faith, a surging spirit ^{resilient} and a soul where virtue is wedded to strength.

7. Thank goodness that that tradition of the EISHESS CHAYIL has not entirely disappeared. No one can appreciate more than I the valiant work done for Torah, directly and indirectly, by the ladies who devote so much of their time, energy and strength to Kodimoh. All of us admire the magnitude of the talent and substance and initiative that you provide for our sacred synagogue, through your Sisterhood.

I am personally thrilled by the number of young women who have devotedly undertaken to conquer their ignorance ^{so assiduously} of the great treasures of Jewish wisdom by studying in our adult classes and ⁱⁿ studying by themselves. ~~You deserve our gratitude~~

You deserve our gratitude for the persistence with which you selflessly labor on behalf of Jewish education, whether in our Hebrew School or that most promising and fruitful educational venture ever undertaken in our city, the Springfield Hebrew Day School. Future generations of Torah-true Jews will be the immortal tribute to your strength and fortitude, for you are acting in the best traditions of Jewish womanhood - that of the EISHESS CHAYIL.

I have nothing but unmixed ~~gratit~~praise for those of you here this morning who were once distant from Orthodoxy, but who have returned to this authentic and genuine expression of our great religion, with intelligence and enlightenment, bringing with you a faith as broad as the horizon, as pure as the heavens and as mighty as the Rock of Gibraltar. You have shown your mettle and your spiritual strength by refusing to be dazzled ~~by~~ glistening exteriors, by refusing to accept second-best, by understanding that Torah is not to be subordinated to fashion and fad and not to be swept aside with every change in the wind

of new doctrine. What Solomon said of the classical EISHESH CHAYIL is true of you: OZE V'HADAR LEVUSHAH - strength and majesty are her clothing.

By identifying yourselves with Torah through your association with Kodimoh, you have demonstrated an appreciation of the truth, which is, that the charge that Orthodoxy holds woman to be inferior is a shallow fiction and an outrageous lie. You have shown the OZE of courage and integrity and insight in understanding that the dignity of Jewish womanhood does not lie in mixing pews and trampling upon our sacred traditions of morality and prayer, but in enhancing the spiritual strength and majesty that G-d has given to you in greater abundance than to man. OZE VHADAR LEVUSHAH, there is something truly majestic about that kind of self-respect and conviction that can resist the onslaught of popular mistakes. It is a powerful faith. Give some of that strength to your weaker sisters. Share it with your menfolk. Teach it to your children. And more power to you.

Of course strength is a virtue in woman.

8. Remember that a woman's tears can be more than the ^{trivial} overflow of empty emotion; if they are a prelude to an act of charity and loving kindness, they are the distilled dew drops of a strong soul. Her smile can be more than ^{just another} a facial expression; if it is meant to encourage a youngster to a good deed, it is the visible ^{halo} sign of ^{integrity} holiness. Her weeping may come from ordinary disappointment; but if it is a determined protest against a pagan world which seeks to corrupt the peace and purity of her home, then it is a ^{powerful +} majestic echo of Divine encouragement. *Granted that strength is indigenous to J. womanhood, there is one unique way in which this*
9. Now let us take the next step. There is one special way in which this unique strength expresses itself as the distinctly womanly character of the Jewish EISHESH CHAYIL. And that is - motherly love. In this cold and hollow world there is nothing quite as abiding as the deep, strong, deathless love within a mother's heart.

"Youth fades; love droops; the leaves of friendship fall:

"A mother's secret love outlives them all."

(Oliver Wendell Holmes)

chorus of

There is, of course, no need for us to join the poets in singing the praises of an emotion so deeply imbedded in the nature of woman and so universal as to be shared by the animal

kingdom. We are speaking today about Jewish womanhood, and therefore the special and distinctive character of motherly love.

Jewish

10. In order to understand this special quality, let us first analyze, logically rather than sentimentally, an important aspect of this love which usually escapes our attention. And that is, the deeply tragic character of motherly love. It is that eminent psychiatrist and discerning student of human nature, Erich Fromm ("The Sane Society") who pointed to the tragic dilemma involved in the love of a mother for her child. He says, "in order for the helpless child to grow, it must become more and more independent, until it does not need mother any more. It requires the most intense love on the mother's side, and yet this very love must help the child to grow away from her and become fully independent....it is a task in which most mothers fail, to love the child and at the same time to let it go." This is the painful paradox, then: to love the child and let it go, to shower upon him love, which means the drawing together of two hearts, only for the purpose of separation and independence. Clergymen and family counsellors see the bitter fruit of this tragedy all too often: mothers who refuse to allow their children to grow up and are jealous of their affections, and children who either are so attached to their mothers that they never do grow up emotionally, or, who once they leave the protective influence of mother, so completely rebel that they lose any real loyalty to their mother who through sleepless nights and with agonizing suspense nourished them from helpless infancy and carried them through crisis and danger to manhood and womanhood.

But must it be so? Must motherly love always sour into frustration? Is the tragedy unavoidable?

No, certainly not if we are to consider that most precious relationship as Jewish women always have. In Jewish family life, the love was there, the independence was there and the maturity was there. And this was accomplished by the realization that the mother must give her child more than material gifts and physical comfort. ^{even more than emotional security.} Of course these are necessities in life - but an animal mother gives that to her calf too. The secret of Jewish motherly love lies in the greatest gift any mother can give her child - a purpose in life, ^{present to} a ~~sharing with~~ him of the most cherished ideals of her heart, giving him a faith which makes this all too painful journey through life not empty and senseless but one marked by love and dedication to something worthwhile, loyalty to a higher power ⁱⁿ which both mother and child share. SHMA BNI MUSSAR AVICHA V'AL TITOSH TORAS IMECHA, said Solomon, Listen my son to the reproach of your father and do not leave the Torah of your mother. A father may scold and

rebuke and reproach. But it is the mother who with devotion and love and kindness gives a child his love for Torah and his strength of soul, a love which a child never outgrows and through which he remains bound to his mother ~~in~~ throughout life in a mature love. Parents who have given their child this kind of upbringing do not experience the tragedy which so many others experience in greater or lesser degree.

11. I think that that is what our tradition meant when it recorded the famous story of Hannah's gift to her infant son Samuel. You will recall from yesterday's Haftorah that Hannah was ^{barren} ~~childless~~ and came to pray for a child, vowing that she would dedicate him to the service of G-d. Her stirring prayers were answered, and when the child, Samuel, was three years old, she brought him to Shiloh, where the Temple was, and there he was raised and became one of the greatest Prophets our people ever had. Now ~~the~~ Tradition adds that Samuel was a frail child, and that his mother made for him a garment which she gave him when she presented him at the Temple, and that that garment grew with the child, so that he always wore it. Even in his maturity, while he was making history, he wore that garment, and he even was buried in it.

What was that garment? It was the special and distinctive kind of motherly love that a genuine Jew ~~ess~~ bears for her child - a spiritual love, a teaching of Torah, a religious upbringing. When that is what a mother gives a child, then ~~he~~ it grows with him, and it follows him into the grave. With that kind of motherly love no tragedy can show its face, because there can be love and maturity and independence all at the same time. ^{of course. Hannah could have acted differently.} Hannah ^{she} could have pampered him, she could have kept him antiseptic, could have worried about how much his small mind can absorb, she could have told the High Priest at the Temple that her little Samuel was a sickly boy and needed the sunshine and piano lessons and the dentist and a chance to sleep late on Saturday mornings, so why bother him to come to Junior Congregation. She could have told the High Priest that a Jewish Education is all good and well, but wasn't the Holy Temple a bit too segregated and parochial. She could have promised to talk it over with her little ^{3-yr. old} son and then ^{found that she} failed to convince him, on the basis of a rational approach and an appeal to history, that a Jewish maximal education was for him. She could have been ^{hollow} a notorious spiritual weakling and given all the arguments so many of our contemporary mothers do - but then the garment she sewed for him would have shrunk, and he would have outgrown

it, rejecting her pampering love and himself amounting to nothing more than a normal, well-adjusted mediocrity. But not so Hannah - her gragment grew with the child. Her love was a happy, fruitful and everlasting one. For she gave her child the spirit, the faith, the Torah which made of him the greatest religious teacher of his age, ^{a man to whom kings bowed.} No wonder, then, that on the High Holy Days when we trace the origins of our greatest Prophets, we begin not with the mature Samuel - but with his mother!

12. One of our Ten Commandments reads: Honor thy father and thy mother so that thy days may be long. I suggest that the reverse is true too. If parents will make their children's days long, if they will fill them with meaning ^{purposefulness} and something worth living for, ^{then they will receive} ~~and deserve~~ the love and honor and respect from their children that they seek. ^{deserve} Not tragedy but honor is the result of Jewish motherly love.

13. An inspired poet (Wm. Stewart Ross) once wrote,

"They say that man is mighty, / He governs land and sea, / He wields a mighty scepter / O'er lesser powers that be; / But a mightier power and stronger / Man from his throne has hurled, /

For the hand that rocks the cradle / Is the hand that rules the world."

Right you are, Mr. Poet! The hand that rocks the cradle; ^{the hand, the hand of she who} ~~that~~ gives the child of her spiritual strength and fortitude of faith, ^{who} ~~that~~ shares with him common religious ideals; ^{the hand, who} ~~that~~ gives him a Jewish motherly love, ^{who} ~~that~~ teaches him a blessing and trains him in prayer, that hand can bring to this world not the rule of terror and naked, brutal force, but the rule of reason and faith and lovingkindness and goodness. For the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world!

Your hands, my dear ladies, the hands that rock the cradle and clothe the infant, the hands that feed him tenderly and lead him to school and "shule" encouragingly, the hand that points out to him even greater heights, those hands can make this world a world worth ruling. What an awful responsibility lies in your hands this day! For yours is the task of guiding the spiritual and religious destinies of your homes: the glories as well as the responsibilities. You have the choice: acted in the tradition of the sainted mothers of Israel, or blindly follow the empty, pagan fashions of the moment; fill your homes with ^{the holiness of} holiness or leave it a vacuum; make yours a Jewish home and keep the love and honor of your children even after they leave your home - or leave it non-Jewish and become enmeshed in the tragedy of children lost to you and lost to us. Create a generation or destroy a ~~future~~ generation.

Make for us a Jewish future, or - Heaven Forbid - blot our names out from under the heavens. Lead us back to the warm, rich heritage of Israel, or let us be lead astray by the shiny and gilded exteriors which, inside, are completely cold and horribly empty. Make for us spiritual garments in which can grow to our full stature, or give us tiny tokens of your affections which will shrink and inhibit our souls.

For this is more than a call to arms: ~~it is a call to the~~ hands that can rule the world.

The sound of the Shofar you will soon hear is a mighty ^{call} ~~challenge~~ to hearts and minds and ^{of those whose} souls. After the Shofar we shall say: HAYOM HARAS OLAM, ^{IM KA'VANIM IM KA'AVADIM} today is the birth ^{day} of the world, ^{when it is determined whether we are to be slaves or free.}

Today too we ~~turn~~ ^{we say to you!} to those who give birth to our generations, to the mothers of Israel. And yours is the choice: IM KA'VANIM IM KA'AVADIM, shall we be slaves or children. Dodge your sacred duties as Jewish mothers, and you will drive your children to slavery, making of them slaves to the great void in their hearts, slaves to drift and assimilation. Or act in the grand and resplendent tradition of the Mothers of Israel, gird yourselves with your spiritual strength, and your children will remain your children, with honor and love and respect and loyalty. For they will ever be BANIM LAMAKOM, G-d's children, and hence bound to you through His word, which is ^{this eternal} ~~the~~ Torah.

14. Today the challenge of the Shofar is directed even more to the House of Jacob, the women, than to the House of Israel, the men. Let the sound of Shofar reach ~~the~~ the deepest recesses of your hearts. Let it inspire you to exert the strong spirits which G-d has so graciously given to you, and return to Torah with your families, ^{at the side of your husbands.} Then you will be assured of more than a year of happiness and goodness - but ^{a lifetime} ~~an eternity~~ of blessedness in your families and peace in your homes. Then you will be doing more than bringing your children back to G-d; you will be bringing them back to yourselves. For so does our Talmud tell us of the brilliant and saintly sage, R. Joseph ben Hiyya, that while lecturing to his students he heard the footsteps ^{disciples} of his mother. Whereupon he turned to his ~~students~~ and exclaimed, "Let me rise before the approaching glory of G-d."

can not be yours. May it ~~not~~ be so.

That kind of J. honor + love