The pathetic tragedy of a great climax is the disappointing anti-climax. This disappointing aftermath to greatness is observable in all aspects of life, on all levels and in all dimensions. How pitiable, for instance, is the role of England today. The great and mighty Brittania, who ruled the waves and upon whom the sun never set, is now humbled to the position of sparring partner to two little, third-rate kingdoms who, at least in this millenia, never approached the pride of Britain. Or take certain newspapers, or a certain leading woman columnist; once they were the staunch and fearless of freedom and self-determination and tolerance and decency — — and now they are knee-deep in the mud of reactionary backwardness and narrowness. cries Isaiah, "how art thou fallen from the heavens, O day-star, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, thou who didst cast lots over nations!! How pathetic is a wreckage which once was a proud ship, or a people, who, having just reached the summit of holiness and received the Ten Commandments, now dances savagely about a Golden Calf.

Just three days ago we reached the highest point of the year. Our hearts were thrilled at the recitation of the Avodah, and our spirits quickened at the sublime holiness of the Neilah Services and the blowing of the Shofar. Yet how the spirit sinks the second after the shofar call! The aura of holiness disappears suddenly as does the sunshine when a dark cloud passes. In one second we tumble from the heights of Yom Kippur to the emptiness of week-day. What a sudden and disappointing transformation. No wonder, then, that the first words we recite after Neilah, at the beginning of the Maariv Service, are "May our Merciful G-d forgive our iniquity". One might think that it is impossible to sin in so short a time. Yet our iniquity, our sin, consists in that most of us allow this anti-climax to set in. The spirit sinks after the holy Neilah, and the Maariv is condensed into the least possible time between the taking off of the Talith and the putting on of the coat.

What is needed, if we are to preserve the Yom Kippur mood and feeling, is to give it "staying power"; we must, as our mystics were wont to say, draw from the flame of the holiness of Yom Kippur and with it sanctify the entire year.
Yom Kippur is indeed a flame of holiness, says our Shulchan Aruch, our Code of Laws; in every place are we to light the candles for Yom Kippur. The holiness of the day sheds light and gives warmth to everyone and everywhere, "in synagogues and study halls". The white robes and the beautiful melodies and the impressive services fill our synagogues with the radiant sanctity of the day. But not only here does the flame of Yom Kippur sanctify, but also in the dark streets and in the sick-room do we light the Yom Kippur candles. The solemnity of the day penetrates even those areas where only darkness had reigned before. Walking home after the Kol Nidre services, we could feel Yom Kippur even on Park Avenue! The dark streets of our city and the dark alley-ways in some Jewish hearts were brightly illuminated by the holiness of the day. People who were suffering from chronically sick souls came to receive of its blessings, and felt relieved.

But often it happens that the candle dims and is extinguished even before the day is over. Some people reach the height of their religious experience at Kol Nidre, others at the Avodah, and some reach the maximum at Neilah. And in this case, where the flame has petered out before the day is done, the law is — we must relight the candles after Yom Kippur! And we must never again extinguish that flame. Those resolutions which we made when the candle burned at its brightest when we felt Yom Kippur penetrating our innermost soul, must be resumed after the day is gone. Certainly most of us feel the anti-climax, the whirl-wind arrival of every-dayness and profaneness which dashes our spirits like ice-water and extinguishes the flame of Yom Kippur which burns in our hearts. But that must not discourage us. We must relight that candle, rekindle our souls, recapture some of that Yom Kippur spirit. And then, we must resolve that never will we allow our candle flames to be extinguished at the close of Yom Kippur, neither by ourselves nor by others. A sort of resolution to keep our resolutions. We must learn to survive the anti-climax and continue from where we stopped.
We must learn to keep the circuit clear, and to successfully carry over the spiritual energy with which we were charged on Yom Kippur to the entire year; and despite all resistance, let the current of holiness and sacredness of this one day guide us throughout the other 364. We must resolve that we will not allow either ourselves or others to dampen our spirits and hasten and deepen the anti-climax.

There is no doubt that many people attain greatness or profundity during moments of inspiration. But the test of its efficacy is when that greatness or inspiration can be translated into every-day and every-year life. The exodus from Egypt, was in itself a great and Divine event. But had the matter stopped there, had it been gone and forgotten after the first rebellious sin by our forefathers in the Sinai Desert, then it would have been recorded in the annals of mankind as merely another abortive and unsuccessful grab at greatness. Instead, it was translated into the life of our people as a living and dynamic motif. All our holidays, included, are referred to as a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt. The spirit engendered by the crossing of the Red Sea was able to survive its anti-climax, the faithlessness of the Israelites, and has become an inspiration not to one but to hundreds of generations. By successfully overcoming its first great obstacle, the apathy and indifference and mediocrity which result from great fulfillment, the Exodus has dominated the life of a people and outlived Time into Eternity.

If only the world could learn this great secret! At the end of the last war, the world powers were charming lovers. The international honeymoon was on. Affirmations of friendship and declarations of camaraderie resounded in three continents. Yet one crisis, one anti-climax, was enough to precipitate a serious deterioration of relations. Rather than attempt to recapture that spirit of amity, the great powers allowed a chain-reaction of crises to take place. And the critical state we are in today is ample and ominous testimony of the world's failure to recapture that feeling of brotherhood and let it burn bright again. The world has failed to declare a "zecher le' international peace".
The survival of the Jew throughout the ages can be traced to this unique ability which the engineer might call "pick-up power". Rabbi Nachman Krochmal, the famous philosopher and scholar of the last century, has formulated an entire and consistent theory of Jewish history on the basis of this remarkable restorative prowess, this "pick-up power" of the Jew. We survived the עונת ים in the desert, because we were able to relight the candle which guided us through the Red Sea. We survived the sin of the Golden Calf because we recaptured the holiness of the flames atop Mount Sinai. We survived the Babylonian exile because we invoked the glory of the First Temple. And now we have survived the Great Exile, an anti-climax of 2,000 years, by constantly recalling the sublimity of the Second Temple, by teaching the heroism of Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiva, by studying the dicta of Hillel and the arguments of Shammai, by reciting and reliving the Avodah of the Kohan Godol in the Sanctuary.

It is this talent for recapturing the spirit of the climax which guarantees survival after the anti-climax. Certainly, as humans, we are subject to the failings of the human flesh. We have no doubt experienced a "let-down" after Yom Kippur. But after the "let down" there must come the "pick up", we must relight the Yom Kippur candle and resolve that we shall make every effort to prevent any anti-climax from ever occurring again.

And while we mortals continue to strive for the attainment of sanctity and greatness throughout our lives despite the many crises that ensnare us, we hope and pray to G-d that He will some day enable us to live a complete life-time dominated by the climax of holiness, a climax unattended by anti-climax, a sanctity not followed by profaneness.

לעִם עַל לְשׁוֹנָה, שֶׁלֹּא יָנוּשֶׁת. We lift our voices in a song of prayer, anticipating that great future in which every day will be graced with the serenity of the Sabbath, and in which all life will be blessed with the sanctity of our Holy Days and Festivals.