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As our congregation gathers for this holy convocation, prepared to address G-d on this holiest night of the year, there are many ways in which we can understand our relation to Him. In the Yom Kippur Prayerbook, in the portion before the confessional, we enumerate some of them. One is purely spiritual: KI ANU AMECHA V'ATA ELOKEINU, we, the Children of Israel, are Thy people, and Thou art our G-d. Another is devotional: ANU VANECHA V'ATA AVINU - we come to G-d as children to a Father. The third is an approach of the Jewish people to G-d in fear and trembling: ANU AVADECHA V'ATA ADONEINU - we are Thy slaves, and Thou - our Master.

I prefer to think, however, that on this holy night of Kol Nidre, so filled with sacred associations, so evocative of the deepest longings of the Jewish soul, so stirring to the bit of Jewish heart within us, so conducive to the feelings of warmth and goodness and companionship and affection that move us, that on this night we are best characterized by the relationship ANU RAYASECHA V'ATA DODEINU, we are Thy faithful and Thou art our Beloved; Israel is the faithful, loving wife, addressing her beloved, divine Husband. When our Prophets reached their loftiest heights of inspiration, they spoke of G-d and Israel as <sup>loved</sup> husband and <sup>beloved</sup> wife. When Jeremiah is commanded to address the citizens of Jerusalem, he tells them the words of the Lord: ZACHARTI LACH CHESSED NE'URAYICH, AHAVAS KELULOSAYICH (2:2), "I remember your youthful devotion, the love of your bridal days" and AHAVAS OLAM AHAVTICH AL KEIN MESHACHTICH CHESSED (31:2), "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with affection have I drawn you near to Me." And at the same time, when our Prophets accuse our people of disloyalty to G-d, it is in the rich and powerful metaphors of marital disloyalty and faithlessness. ACHEIN BAGDAH ISHAH ME'REI'EHA, KEIN B'GADETEM BI BEIS YISRAEL, NE'UM HA'SHEM (3:20) - "Surely as a wife who treacherously leaves her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O House of Israel, saith the Lord." And Isaiah even speaks of the SEFER KERISUS, the divorce, the GET, that G-d will send to His beloved Israel because of her treachery! So that G-d and Israel are related to each other not only as Creator to created, not only as master to servant, but also <sup>lovingly</sup> as husband to wife. — and therefore <sup>beloved</sup>.

And of course, as with every human couple, there is an occasional disagreement and moment of unpleasantness between G-d and Israel. As we gather here in the House of the Lord, we acknowledge some of the complaints G-d has against us. We have been ignoring Him, taking Him for granted. We have not given G-d the proper respect due Him. Not all we have done has reflected creditably upon Him. And we, for our part, do approach Him this evening with our complaints against Him and, in the spirit of the great Rabbi of Berdichev, we even offer our pretexts, in love and in devotion, and we say: Almighty G-d, You declared Your love to us, saying VE'EIRASTICH LI L'OLAM, I will betroth Thee to Me forever; we followed You faithfully through a great desert and suffered through 2,000 years of bitterness and loneliness in exile because of You. Do we not deserve better examples of Your love for us? If indeed, RIBBONO SHEL OLAM, you are the loving husband of Israel, then You too are bound by the Torah's and Talmud's standards for Jewish domestic happiness. And does not Your Talmud tell us LE'OLAM YEHEI ADAM ZAHIR BI'CHEVOD ISHTO, a man ought always respect his wife? Where then is our KOVOD, our honor, when even the democracies of the world snub the State of Israel and show little concern for her survival? This year American Jews lost the battle for SHECHITAH and now have their humiliation and defeat compounded by the harassment of the Sunday Blue Laws which punish those who would observe Thy SHABBOS - - where is our KOVOD, O G-d? And ~~have~~ did not the Talmud teach Jewish husbands L'OLAM YEHEI ADAM ZAHIR B'ONAAS ISHTO SHE'MI'TOCH SHE'DIMASAH ~~KER~~ METZUYAH, ONAASAH KEROVAH, that a Jewish husband ought never wrong his wife and bring her to tears — why then, O G-d, can You allow your beloved Israel to be wronged and brought to tears? Have You not counted the tears spilled over the millions of Jews behind the Iron Curtain who dare not speak a word of Yiddish or open a Chumash? Have we not been brought to tears over the plight of our Jews in Arab la-

Who, in the hundreds of thousands are afraid this very night to come to Thy house?

But if we were to disregard these incidental irritations between G-d and His people, and to ask ourselves: what is the essential relationship between G-d and Israel today? Looking at the the situation from the long perspective of history, are the Jews of America loyal to their G-d? And can we say that in this year 5,719 G-d has abandoned His once beloved people, or is He still very much involved with her destiny?

~~Has the much heralded "return to religion" produced any improvement in the love between the Creator and His people, or are we just stirring the cold, dead embers of a love long burnt out? In a word: are we still ANU RAYASECHA, the loving wife of Almighty G-d?~~

~~Probably our first impulse is to answer "Yes." The fact is we are here in shul for Kol Nidre. Every shul across the country is crowded with worshippers such as us. Is not that a token of the fact that Israel has not forgotten her Lord, that we are still the beloved of G-d? We are here - - is not that proof that we still have interest?~~

~~Well, is it? Is the fact of our presence this once or twice or thrice a year really proof that we have some religion within us? Is it really enough to show interest when what is called for is love? Is it sufficient to visit just once a year and cry out "Look, I'm here, I've thereby fulfilled my obligations"? Well, let us look at the decisions of Jewish law. Let us see what the Talmud has to say about this.~~

The Talmud records the interesting case of a man who leaves his home for a perilous journey, and prior to his departure gives his wife a conditional divorce. He says, if I do not return to you by a certain time, say thirty days or twelve months, then this GET, this divorce, shall be valid. If I do come home before then, then this is not to be considered as legal, valid document and we are the same husband and wife as before. Tehn, the Talmud (Ketubot 2b) tells us, he left. At the end of the period, at the very last minute, he appeared. BUT - - the twon was situated on a river, and he appeared on the other side of the river, and PASKAH MABRA - - there were no ferried to take him accross, they were elsewhere or out of commission. And so the husband stands at the other side of the river and cries out CHAZU D'ASA'I, CHAZU D'ASA'I, look, I have Come, look, I have come. Well, what is the law: has he fulfilled his condition? Is this called "coming home", is this a genuine "return" which thus makes the divorce invalid? Or is the fact that he is elsewhere and not truly at home make the GET valid and dissolve the marital bonds between husband and wife? The Talmud's decision is: AMAR SHMUEL - - LO SHMEI MASYAH - this is not called returning, this is not a fulfillment of the condition of coming home - - he may shout all he wants, as long as he has not crossed the river and actually come home, he is regarded as outside, away, and the GET is a GET! And of course the same principle applies if the divorce was conditioned upon the wife's returning and she remained beyond the river announcing CHAZU D'ASA'I.

\*\*\*My dear friends, this is a technical decision of Jewish law, and yet it when we apply to the domestic situation of Jewish religion, when we apply it to our own loving relationship with G-d, it is not a technical part of divorce law, but a golden nugget of Jewish wisdom and philosophy!

Many of us have been away from any contact with G-d for a full 12 months, since last Yom Kippur. We seem to have forgotten all about Him in the interim. We have failed to visit the House of G-d, and have not turned to Him in gratitude for His many favors to us. From our conduct and loyalties and feelings during this year, one might think that the fire has gone out of the love, the romance between G-d and His beloved Israel may be on the rocks. Absence does not seem to have made the heart grow fonder. And tonight we, the recalcitrant spouse, have returned. We come with a profession of love on our lips: V'AHAVTA ES HA'SHEM ELOKECHA, thou shalt love the Lord thy G-d. And we now wonder: where do we stand with G-d? Tonight we meet with Him for a reunion. But is it the kind of reunion in which husband and wife meet with their lawyers in order to plan for a separation - - or a reunion leading to reconciliation and a rekindling of the old love? Does Israel meet in order to continue her estrangement from G-d Who now accuses her of absolute desertion and faithlessness, in order to prepare for a GET - - or is it the beginning of renewal of happiness together, the beginning of true SHALOM BAYIS, domestic peace and love? Do we meet to break our vows to each other



~~in the language of Kol Nidre -- or to forgive each other in the words VE'SALAGHTI KIDEVARECHA -- "all is forgiven"?~~

If we accept the decisions of Judaism on family life as decisive in our religious life, our age-old love affair with G-d, then we must realize once and for all that merely showing ourselves to Him once a year is not enough. CHAZU D'ASAI, look, I'm here, is nothing - LO SHMEI MASYA -- that is not regarded as a home-coming! G-d is simply not satisfied with a pious announcement of good intentions and perfunctory interest in His welfare. To stand on the other side of the river and declare CHAZU DASAI, we're still with you -- that is inviting a divorce, an absolute and eternal separation between G-d and ourselves. Oh, of course, we can produce excuses. We protest that the stream of life and its harsh demands prevent us from crossing over into G-d's home. We blame our daily involvements in business and work and play and family -- the stream of life runs fast in these days, and life's river is far too deep. We can't cross. We may try to blame poor ferry-service -- our environment is not conducive to Jewish living, the services are not always comprehensible to us, PASKA MAVRA -- the ferry-boat of spiritual inspiration is simply absent from the modern scene, our spiritual capacity is too small -- but excuses to the contrary notwithstanding, Jewish law is clear: CHAZU D'ASAI LO SHMEI MASYA, a mere announcement from afar is meaningless. If there is to be no divorce, O Israel, then you must come closer. If it is to remain ANU RAYASECHA V'ATA DODEINU, a rekindling of the old love 'twixt G-d and Israel, then we must stop blaming the currents of life and stop blaming the conditions of the ferries -- rather, we must take the plunge into the very raging torrents of life's difficulties, risk some self-sacrifice and hard work if necessary, and if there are no boats, no easy ways to Religion -- why then, swim! Through life's perils and demands and problems -- swim, struggle, work until you can actually embrace Judaism! The man who will not get his feet wet cannot hope to return to Torah. LO SHMEI MASYA. It is only if we are willing to plunge into all life's problems that we can effect a true reconciliation with G-d, that Torah can begin to mean something in our lives.

And my dear friends, with this definition, with this criterion, I judge tonight the condition of this Congregation Kodimoh. ~~The spiritual marriage has, for us, more than an even chance.~~ Last Yom Kippur I stood before you and from this pulpit appealed to you for your cooperation on the most sacred and holy task that this congregation has undertaken in the past 2½ decades: erecting a new MAKOM KADOSH, a new synagogue. At that time the leaders of this congregation were a bit fearful and apprehensive. We had to cross a big river -- time, money, conviction, enthusiasm, plans, and all the problems of building. We had no ferries to offer -- no easy solutions, no sleight of hand to carry us across our difficulties and to magically produce a new edifice. We were concerned because we did not know how our cong. would react. Would you cooperate, or -- heaven forbid -- throw the GET at the feet of Kodimoh and all that we stand for. Would Kodimoh's membership ~~abandon and desert our G-d and Torah and BEIS HAKNESSES~~ by default, by merely talking building without doing, by merely crying out CHAZU D'ASAI and not acting big?

Tonight I tell you that your reactions have exceeded our expectations. You have reacted with enthusiasm, with love, you were not content to talk but you took the plunge until today we have passed the point of no return, we are past midstream. During this past year this congregation has not only not abandoned its sacred goals, but has done some hard and constructive work. We have indicated that SHALOM BAYIS prevails, that we are going to come home -- to a new and more majestic home, for our people are filled with love and devotion to their G-d and their synagogue. Only a few more hard strokes and Kodimoh will have arrived!

Our official campaign was undertaken and carried through. Our people volunteered their services and reacted with an enthusiasm and love that astonished and inspired our leadership. We did not reach our top-figure. But we made many times more anyone would have dared dream of four years ago. Our workers developed a team-spirit, a brotherliness which will long stand us in good stead. Our ladies showed the competence and loyalty for

which they have always been famous. Even our youngsters displayed an interest and zeal and capacity for work for our new project which warmed our hearts. This project of a New Kodimoh has galvanized the spirits of all our people -- and brought new respect for our congregation in the eyes of the entire community. We have indeed taken the plunge into the river of work for our synagogue, with all its currents and cross-currents -- and we have found the water refreshing! No community which is willing to undertake the work that you have for an Orthodox synagogue ~~is~~ can be accused of deserting G-d, of deserting Torah and tradition. No community ~~of~~ that has shown such enthusiasm and love and warmth can be accused of just talking, of CHAZU D'ASAI, and not doing!

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We have come/~~far~~ enough to the achievement of our aims for me to feel that from here on the congregation can swim by itself and does not necessarily need the personal involvement of the Rabbi in its building program. Today you may believe me that when from the day I came and spoke of new facilities for Kodimoh, to last Kol Nidre eve when we formally announced our campaign, to this night of Kol Nidre when I urge you with all my heart and all my soul to finish the task with success and with dignity -- you know that you are not being asked to build ~~for~~ a synagogue for a Rabbi. You are asked to build a BEIS ELOKIM -- a home for G-d, a synagogue which will be a source of pride to the Orthodox community, which will be living proof to the public at large that we Orthodox Jews are a thriving, healthy, vital group, that the tradition of Abraham and Moses and R. Akiva and Maimonides and the Vilna Gaon is not dead, that it has been successfully transplanted on American soil. I asked you then and I ask you now to build a shul for the sake of your children. Do not believe that pernicious myth that the youth is leaving us. He who has eyes in his head does not say such things. Where else in this city will you find 150 to 160 children under Bar Mitzvah attending services every single Shabbos? Where else will you find the number of teenagers with such a healthy interest in and commitment to our Jewish traditions and observances? In how many of the non-Orthodox synagogues will you find young men who can conduct a complete Saturday morning service as they do 3 times a year here in Kodimoh? -- or where so many teenagers evince such a lively and genuine and heart-warming interest in continuing their Jewish education even through the college level? We of Kodimoh have more to be proud of our youth than any other institution in many a city across this land! When you build, my friends, you build for the future! And if to erect this ~~synagogue~~ is an act of love for G-d and an act of confidence in our youth, in our future, then it ~~is~~ certainly is a wholesomely selfish act. When you continue this campaign to its successful conclusion, you build for yourselves too, just as when you provide for your children you are in a deeper sense providing for yourself.

No, Kodimoh has not deserted G-d, and G-d will not abandon her. We have not been satisfied with CHAZU D'ASAI, with empty talk, but have begun on our project, and have completed the major part of it. Let me urge you this night when we turn to G-d and say ANU RAYASECHA V'ATA DODEINU, this night when the old love is reawakened and when in the hearts of all of us the flame of affection and devotion is rekindled -- let me urge you to "come across", to finish what remains to be done. Do not be impatient with your leadership. They are doing what has to be done without unnecessary delay, but also without wasteful and dangerous haste. He who carries a heavier load swims slower -- but brings more with him. Already plans have been completed to reactivate both the general and special gifts divisions. The preliminary fruit of our architect's thinking is on display in the lobby. A site has been chosen -- one which will do justice to our labors. Of you, my dear friends, all we ask is this: you have shown that you can put your best foot forward; do not now drag your feet. Give of your time, of your substance, of your ideas, even of your criticisms -- but most of all, give your most treasured possession: your spirit, your love, your devotion, your unbridled and unlimited enthusiasm.

The great Hassidic teacher, author of the SEFAS EMESS, has told us that on Passover G-d performed the KIDDUSHIN, He betrothed Israel, and on SUKKOS the NISSUIN, He -- so to speak -- took Israel in marriage, and the Sukkah itself is the sign of the Chuppah.



On this night of Yom Kippur, just five days before Sukkos, the anniversary of G-d's and Israel's love, we affirm that the "SHIDDUCH" is still on, that the historical and spiritual ties which have always assured the mutual love between G-d and His people shall not be ruptured by us. We shall not remain satisfied with professions of faith, with CHAZU D'ASAI, we shall not rely on flimsy excuses. We shall, if necessary, cross rivers and streams, and struggle against any waves no matter how mighty, for what impels us is the burning love for G-d and His Torah. And MAYIM RABIM LO YUCHLU LICHBOS ES HA'AHAVAH, no waters can quench such love. On this night of Yom Kippur we rededicate ourselves to Almighty G-d, and reaffirm without reservation,

ANU RAYASECHA V'ATA DODEINU,

we are Thy faithful, and Thou art our Beloved.

Benediction - a.g. In the Talmud, the Sages record with approval a bit of advice to the Jewish husband (B'ra 17a): "Be like a wife - if your wife be short, bend down & listen to her whisper. O G-d, as Thy beloved, we in this Y.K. feel remorseful for all our deficiencies & inadequacies. Many of the sins we have committed against Thee which have shortened our spiritual stature & reduced our prayers to a whisper. Nevertheless, O G-d, do Thou in Thy goodness & love follow the advice of our Rabbis - 'Be like a wife' - do Thou bend Thy ear to us, listen to our whispered prayers, forgive us, & grant us a year of peace & happiness."