

Rabbi Beth H Klafter
Rosh HaShana Day 2 5777
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Adam & Eve: A Tree and A Bucket

I've been talking a lot about LISTS this Rosh HaShana, beginning with Sunday evening when I spoke about how lists can help us make sense of the world. I compiled a list of possible HHD sermon topics. Yesterday morning, I shared lists of virtues and traits and values for ourselves and our nation. At Children's Services yesterday afternoon, I distributed an alphabetical list of ways we can make ourselves and others around us feel happy and proud.

It seems fitting, then, that a few minutes ago I read an inventory, essentially a list, of everything that was created at the beginning of the Torah:

- Light, Darkness;
- Water, sky;
- Earth and seas;
- Plants and trees;
- The sun, the moon and the stars;
- All sorts of animals and creations and, of course:
- Human beings.

This is actually the first of TWO creation stories in Genesis. The second version is presented in the verses immediately after this story.

The second narrative is about Adam and Eve. Yes, they were on my list of possible sermons – in the category of “Bible stories we read on the high holidays”. The others were The Binding of Isaac (check – yesterday); Jonah and the ‘big fish’ and the prophet Isaiah (there's still Yom Kippur!)

Adam and Eve find themselves in the Garden of Eden. More precisely, they are placed in the Garden by God. God explains to them that there are two trees in the Garden, *“the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge.”* (Genesis 2.9) God then warns Adam and Eve, *“Of the Tree of Knowledge, you may not eat, for the moment you eat of it you shall be doomed to die.”* (Genesis 2.17)

Perhaps you remember the rest of the story – The serpent entices Eve to take a bite of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which she does. And then she shares the fruit with Adam. As a punishment for disobeying God's command and eating of the forbidden tree, they are banished from the Garden.

The Tree of Life remains in Eden. But they do not.

We still use the image of “the tree of life” to describe our Torah. During services, we sing, **aytz chayim hee**, *It is a tree of life to those who hold it fast, and all who cling to it find happiness. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.*

Unfortunately, we are left only with the metaphor – the Tree itself is lost to Adam and Eve, and to all of their descendants, and that includes all of us. Without the nourishment from the Tree of Life, we cannot live forever: Instead, we live our lives as mortal beings.

This the essence of the high holidays – the freshness of a new year, a new me, balanced by the knowledge that we don’t have endless time.

On Sunday night, several of you mentioned that I could have talked about the Bucket List; I told you to come back for more services, and here we are. The phrase actually did not originate with the movie, but it certainly made it quite popular in the last (almost) ten years.

I’m sure many of you will remember the movie: actors Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson starred as two terminally ill men who both have a desire to complete a list of things they want to see and do before they die – before they ‘kick the bucket’ – giving the film the title, of course, “The Bucket List.”

There is a Facebook page of Bucket Lists – of course there is – where people post trips to exotic places, concerts, fancy food and all kinds of activities.

There are hundreds of books on Amazon, suggesting items for your bucket list:

- 100 things to do in (fill in the city) before you die
- Fifty places to hike before you die
- Ten Fun Things to do before you die.
- 30 Craziest things to do before you die.
- Published just last Thursday, 100 Jewish Things to do before you Die

You can even find a list of instructions to guide you in creating your bucket list:

- Don’t write it all at once
- Target different areas of your life
- Make some easier to achieve than others
- Set goals
- Have fun!

“Have fun!” is an ironic suggestion, to be sure the list of adventures you want to have before you die.

This morning I do want to discuss a 'bucket list' but this is a Rosh HaShana version of a bucket list. Within this sacred sanctuary, I ask you to consider, what's on your bucket list for 5777. What are the challenges you will endeavor to unravel? The relationships you will build or mend? What are the sweet blessings of your life?

We have heard lately, "Democracy is not a spectator sport." Well, I would add, neither is worship: And neither are the high holidays. And so, I have a bucket and some pens, for those who wish to use them. I invite you to begin your list – in your mind or on the blank cards I have. In creating a list, and taking an inventory of our dreams and hopes, we make them real and we bring them to life.