

I was desperate. It is the High Holydays, as you know. One of our most sacred and significant times of the year, and I was not just not feeling it. These are the ten days of Teshuvah -- ten days of returning to God. I admit it wasn't clicking for me. I could tell you what the word God might mean for me and what it would mean to RETURN to it. As I understand it at this point in my life, the word GOD is about our innate craving for a sense of cosmos and order in the universe; a need to belong and contribute to something greater than ourselves; our desire to know and experience all that we can about this world and whatever world lies beyond it. . . it is among these forces that GOD dwells . Still, even though I was getting it up here (head), I still wasn't finding it in here (heart). I was frustrated and looking for some help, some guidance. I wanted to feel it. I was looking for a sign, any sign ... so I turned to those six seductive letters that form that tempting, silly little word that designates the internet's most powerful search engine: G-O-O-G-L-E. Yes, I confess, I GOOGLED God.

Well, in a mere .18 seconds, my friends at GOOGLE, offered me 57,500,000 web pages that referenced the word, GOD. I was overjoyed, a bit overwhelmed, but sure that within so many sites I would find God and start feelin' it once again. Well, I found many interesting things. Among them I found: www.theinterviewwithgod.com; www.doesgodexist.org; www.god.com (not the #1 site for some reason?!); www.godnetwork.com; a few sites stating things that they think that God hates . . . most notably www.godhatesshrimp.com. I even found a definition for GOD (probably from www.dictionary.com) in case I was not sure for what I was looking. After looking at a definition that included: a male deity thought to control some part of nature or reality ...an idol ... A very handsome man - I was not as sure for what I was looking.

Then, right on the page ... I saw the sign for which I was looking, 'FIND GOD HERE!' Now, that is a sign! I diligently clicked on the link and ... my computer froze. The screen flashed at me: 'Error loading image.' The sign FIND GOD HERE led me astray.

Still, the FIND GOD HERE sign stuck with me. Things would sure be easier this time of year if I could find such signs in the appropriate places. I imagine that FIND GOD HERE is a sign that would attract the attention of many of us. No matter how we understand that word, G-O-D: as a supernatural power; a human made creation to represent our highest ideals and values; a intimate, but inanimate force that is the source of life in the universe; or even if we are not sure about the existence of God ... seeing FIND GOD HERE would at least get a second look.

So, I asked myself -- where do you see these signs that say, FIND GOD HERE in your world? There were clear images that came to my mind. I wonder, if I asked

you to consider this question, In your world where do you see the signs that say, FIND GOD HERE? - What images would come to your mind? I would guess that the places you would place your signs, would not be too different in nature from those I saw in my own mind.

I saw FIND GOD HERE signs as I thought about moments where I knew a kind of exquisite solitude and sense of one-ness with the universe. There were FIND GOD HERE signs as I stood under a spectacular starry sky in the Sinai desert; as I ended my day walking the dog in the peaceful quiet of the neighborhood; and as I crossed the finish line and completed my race of 26.2 miles. I imagine that you would see FIND GOD HERE signs in similar moments of individual spirit -- moments of private reflection and connection with the divine.

I saw FIND GOD HERE signs as I thought about moments where I experienced a sense of warmth and grace from my connection with another human being. There were FIND GOD HERE signs as Addison smiled at me for the very first time; as I stood under the chuppah with Renee; and even when I sat in class and felt that my history teacher was teaching me more than just about history. I imagine that you would see FIND GOD HERE signs in similar moments of the spirit of relationship -moments in which another soul touches and lifts our own.

I saw FIND GOD HERE signs as I thought about moments in which my participation in a larger communal whole helped me to feel empowered by being a part of something good and greater than myself. There were FIND GOD HERE SIGNS as I stood with 80,000 freezing Cleveland Browns fans celebrating an almost certain Super Bowl appearance (thanks, John Elway); as I gathered with Jews from around the world before the Wailing Wall to witness the end of Yom Kippur; and as I stood with Jewish, Christian and Muslim students and teachers to commemorate the first anniversary of September 11th. I imagine that you would see FIND GOD HERE signs in similar moments of the spirit of community - moments in which we as individuals are able to transcend our limits and bask in the power of the collective human spirit.

Here's the thing ... How many of us, when asked where to put the sign would have put it here? Put it outside our synagogue? Put it right here, right now? Put it during one of the dozens of time that we get together to pray as a community throughout the calendar year? How many of us would consider our communal prayer an opportunity to FIND GOD HERE? There are many reasons that bring us here - on this day of days or on Shabbatot when we gather to pray, but how often do we come looking for or seeing FIND GOD HERE? I know that there are some of us who would see FIND GOD HERE signs during times we gather to pray. However, I am going to go out on a limb ... most of the places that we would see FIND GOD HERE signs were not here, were not now (or on Shabbat)

as we gather to PRAY together. We are here for many reasons, but I do not think it is because we see the sign that says, FIND GOD HERE.

I make this statement without any prejudice. For I, too, list the starry sky or the smile on Addison's face or even sitting in the Dawg Pound watching a football game as places for me to put my sign. I make this statement without any judgment, for I, too, read the words of the Unetaneh Tokef prayer that we read this morning (and others like it in our liturgy) and hear how God will determine not only if we will live or die this year, but how we will die and wonder what to do with the tone and theology of this liturgy and tradition that sometimes feels distant and contrary to my own beliefs. I, too come to pray in our community and find myself stilted by some of the limitations of our liturgy or questioning the nature of our method of prayer.

We need to see the FIND GOD HERE signs all over our world, in as many possible nooks and crannies of our lives -- in those precious moments of individual spirit - where we find solitude and awe; within the spirit of relationship; within the spirit of community. But we Jews, seem to forget that this sign, FIND GOD HERE, is found each time we gather on Shabbat to pray together. There is a sign that stands large and bold right here, right now as we come to pray together this day that proclaims, GOD IS HERE.

I believe that we modern Jews have an immature and undeveloped idea of the experience of prayer and communal services. I believe that the expectations, attitudes that Jews bring to a prayer service are limiting and self-defeating. I also believe that our contemporary prayer service - its liturgy and method - is imperfect and at times encourages our access to God with one hand and inhibits it with the other hand. For all these reasons, I believe that many of us do not see, or even realize that at every communal prayer opportunity there is a sign calling to us, FIND GOD HERE.

The Jewish communal prayer experience, our Micah prayer experience offers us the opportunity to know that individual, relationship and communal spirit of divinity. Many times we enter a service with unrealistic expectations - so unfair that we set ourselves up to be disappointed. We expect the epiphanal moment; we look for the exact same awe we see as we stand in solitude beneath the starry sky or before the multi-colored sunset. The prayer service is not designed or constructed to continually and consistently provide that kind of experience. It does offer the opportunity for the indulgence of our individual spirit. Unlike the sunset when we look to be awed, we do not acknowledge that we carry a great portion of the responsibility when we enter that sanctuary for encountering the divine. The gift of the Jewish communal prayer experience is to regularly carve out a time, place and setting for us to slow down, reflect - stop

the world and get off, so to speak, and to access the divine. It provides a familiar and consistent set and order of prayer. It offers the sounds of the Hebrew, for us to not necessarily consider and intellectualize about what they mean – but for us to lose our thinking and to spiritually get lost in the mantra like repetition and recitation – to help us reach this end. Our prayer service offers us a time to create those moments of individual spirit that lead to clarity and groundedness ... and put up our sign, FIND GOD HERE.

It is not always just the prayers in the service that become a part of our accessing the divine. Walk into a service and consider that the tools and means to find God are not only what is written in the prayer book, the Torah scroll or even what is said or sung. The tools and means to this end are also the individuals who share and create this sacred space with you. The people in the service are part of connecting to the divine through the subtle exchange or comment during the service; a discussion that happens before or after noshing on some chocolate; the uncomplicated, yet sincere Shabbat Shalom offered to you by another; and even the simple pleasure of sitting next your partner, your child and sharing the same experience with them for even a few precious moments. Each time we come together to pray we create opportunities for us to connect with another soul and we can say, FIND GOD HERE.

We forget that coming to pray as a community reminds us of the best that we desire and can become. There are many aspects to being a part of community and many reasons that we choose to be a part of this one -- when we pray together we remind ourselves why we value being part of the Micah and greater Denver Jewish community - despite all of their inherent challenges. When we pray together we actively participate in the building and strengthening of our community -- and in turn feel that strength, progress and hopeful inertia. We feel part of something greater than ourselves -- and help to create that something, too. When we do not come together, we miss out on both opportunities. When we create tangible expression of community as we come to pray together, we say to all who may join us, FIND GOD HERE.

You may have said to yourself, or at least asked yourself by now, 'Is this a come to services sermon?' I guess you could label it as simply that, a rabbi's quite common High Holyday attempt to get more people to join him or her at services. If the tone or message sounds like a parent trying to cajole a child into doing her or his homework, then I apologize for I have not done my job this morning as effectively as I need to do so. Ultimately, I do not stand here today presumptuously speaking on God's behalf, telling you that you need to come to services more often. Coming to services is not about me as a rabbi who wishes to assuage my ego or to be able to brag to his colleagues about how many of you are attending services each week. It is much bigger than me or what I think. It is

about you, it is about us ... it about what we cherish about our selves and about this community.

I believe in my heart of hearts that it truly matters how often and how sincerely we look for those signs that announce to us FIND GOD HERE. I do believe that many of you either see or want to see those signs infused into everything we do here at Temple Micah. I do believe that those signs stand here, especially during our prayer services. And, I believe that they stand here unlike they do at any other place in your lives. I do believe that it is we who must place the signs that say FIND GOD HERE - and we must do so together. If we do not see and pursue these signs here, now - for our individual selves, in our relationships and from our community -- then there will be no need for a sign that says, FIND GOD HERE.

We FIND GOD HERE, by being here. We do so by looking and expecting to FIND GOD HERE -- in those moments of individual spirit, connection to one another through relationship and involvement in a unique and vibrant community. If we do not believe we will FIND GOD HERE, we will not FIND GOD HERE. If we do not look to FIND GOD HERE, we will not FIND GOD HERE. If we hope to realize the dreams and visions that so many have expressed for us as a community, if in our hearts we do not see a sign that says FIND GOD HERE each time we come to pray together - those dreams and visions have no foundation, and therefore no future. So, as we conclude our prayers this morning we strive to respond to the call of the Shofar. In its time and place, it is not different than the signs that I speak of this morning. It proclaims to all in earshot -- who dare to hear its call with more than ears -- FIND GOD HERE. As you listen to its piercing call this morning, may you hear with your heart the truth that it speaks about this time that we take to PRAY as a community - GOD CAN BE HERE, GOD WILL BE HERE -- it is only up to us to see the sign.