

**The Power of Our Dreams**  
**Day 2 Rosh Hashanah 5777 – 2016**  
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It was June 30, 1976. An Air France Jet, taking off from Ben Gurion airport had been hijacked and taken to Entebbe in Uganda, where Jews were separated from other passengers. The hijackers were demanding that Israel free terrorists by 2:00 pm the next day.

Tension filled the Israeli cabinet meeting. IDF Chief of Staff Motta Gur had begun to look at options, but none looked good. Many in the cabinet, including Yitzhak Rabin, were ready to consider giving in to their demands. According to the transcript of that meeting, Rabin said: "I feel it might end up being a lot like the 'Bay of Pigs'.

But Shimon Peres raised the concern that a surrender would set a precedent that would endanger lives in the future. Recognizing the risks involved, he still insisted: "If there is a military operation, it's preferable." Until now," he said, "I admit that there's no concrete proposal, only ideas and imagination."

Imagination. Sitting in that cabinet meeting, that was all they had. Imagination. For Shimon Peres, that was enough. Indeed, throughout his life, imagination was Shimon Peres' greatest asset.

Shimon Peres spent his whole life imagining.

Imagine what it would be like if we Jews had our own homeland and were not subjugated to the cruel and vicious hatred of the Europeans among whom he grew up.

Imagine. What if a people who were powerless for 2000 years suddenly had the ability to defend themselves? What if they had their own Navy? Nuclear weapons?

Imagine. What if for the first time in history Jews everywhere in the world would know they were safe because there was a country that cared about them, that would even fly a military action 2500 miles over and into hostile territory to save them?

Imagine. What if a canal could be dug from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea, bringing in fresh water to save the Dead Sea from disappearing, and providing usable water to both Israel and Jordan? What if Israel could transform itself from a kibbutz society to a high tech corridor?

Imagine. What if Israel could have peace, real lasting peace with its Arab neighbors? And with the Palestinians? And if Israel led a regional renaissance that transformed the Middle East?

Yesterday I spoke about the need to move from the world as it is to the world as it should be. I suggested that Elie Wiesel taught us that to achieve that goal we have to start by being able to hear each other's stories. But hearing our stories is not enough. As Peres once said, "there is no future in the past." Moving from the world as it is to the world as it should be does take the

ability to see and hear one another. But it also takes imagination. Building tomorrow requires that we must have the ability to see beyond today, to envision the world as it should be.

When we let our imagination soar we can do anything. But when our imagination is grounded, so are we. As a general rule we are so mired in our current circumstances that we cannot imagine them changing. Let me give you some examples of how hard it is to envision a tomorrow that is different from today:

Dr. Lee DeForest was the inventor of the Television. You might think that such a man would see that anything is possible. But he famously said, “despite all future scientific advances, man will never reach the moon.”

Robert Millikan won the Nobel prize in physics in 1923. He said, “There is no likelihood man can ever tap into the power of the atom.”

An engineer of advanced computer systems at IBM in 1968 famously commented on the microchip saying: But... what is it good for?

And an internal memo at Western Union dated 1876 said the telephone had so many shortcomings that it had no inherent value to us. David Sarnoff’s associates in the 1920s declined to invest in radio saying that the wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value.

And the Decca recording Company, in 1962 rejected the *Beatles* saying “We don’t like their sound, and Guitar music is on its way out.”

Yes, it’s hard to see tomorrow clearly. As Mark Twain said: “You cannot depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.” Even today we laugh when we hear that Elon Musk intends to bring humans to Mars within ten years, and respond with disbelief that self-driving cars will soon be on the road.

And if these challenges are beyond our imagination, how about ending poverty, hunger, hatred, war and terrorism? What of the challenges Jews face of rising anti-Semitism, assimilation and Israel’s daunting challenge to achieve a real secure peace in a State of Israel that is both Jewish and Democratic?

It’s not just global challenges that intimidate us. It’s also the challenges we face in our personal lives. How many of us have relationships that feel so broken that we write off the other person rather than seek a way to rebuild that relationship? How many of us have been hurt so deeply that we cannot see our way to forgive? Grieve so deeply over a loss that we cannot allow ourselves permission to heal? How many of us have suffered a setback or failure that left us too afraid to try again? Or have read the same news stories so often that we have given up on any real change and have resigned ourselves to accept the world as it is?

Our father Abraham had imagination. He could see what others could not.

It is Abraham who is able to first able to imagine the possibility of one God who has no form and rules over all creation.

It is Abraham who is able to imagine a new and better life in a new land.

And it is Abraham who has the chutzpah to imagine that in the name of justice a person can even stand up to God.

When Abraham is ascending Mount Moriah with Isaac, Isaac asks his father a question: Father, where is the lamb? And Abraham replies *Adonai yireh* – God will provide the lamb my son. How did Abraham know that? How did he know that God would provide a substitute for Isaac? Because he was able to imagine a different outcome than the one that seemed so obviously and unavoidably before him.

And you know what? It is because Abraham was able to imagine a different outcome that Isaac was saved. The Torah says, And Abraham *looked*, and there was a ram caught in the thicket. If Abraham had not *looked*, he would not have seen the ram. But Abraham was looking because he was able to see in his mind and heart that there was another way forward.

Abraham's imagination created a new reality, introducing into the world concepts such as monotheism, justice and compassion, founding a people bound to God by covenant. After Abraham dreamed, the world was never the same again.

You know, we are born with the innate capacity to dream. Imagination is God's gift to us from the moment of our creation. God says to Adam and Eve: Be fruitful and prosper and conquer the earth and subdue it. Translation: You can do anything! (You should forgive the expression!), the world is your oyster. That's what God says to Adam and Eve: It's all yours! Anything is possible!

As children all we do is dream. In one moment we see ourselves as an astronaut or a rock star, in the next as a doctor, a football player or the president of the United States. In our childhood world, animals can talk and we can fly. Anything is possible. Children are ready to take on the world and remake it in their image.

So what happens to us? Why do we lose our imagination? What happens to our ability to dream?

Think of our imagination as a bicycle tire (I had to get a bike in here somewhere!), a bicycle tire that is losing air. It's not like a sudden blow out. It's more like a slow leak. Over time we suffer failures, setbacks and disappointments, and with each one a little air leaks out of our imagination until it's all gone and we have a flat tire. That's right, you and I all too often suffer from a spiritual flat tire. A flat tire. We just don't have the ability to dream, we have been

beaten down too much by our experience, and we just can't do it anymore. And you know what else? You can't go anywhere with a flat tire. So we give up. We sit at the side of the road on the highway of life and we go nowhere.

That's why I am talking about imagination with you today. Not because it is something easy to do. It's not easy. It's hard. It's hard to find the energy to pump ourselves back up and to dream. But we must pump ourselves back up. We must teach ourselves to use our imagination, to believe in ourselves and to believe in others, and to see in our minds eye the world we want to live in, the world as it should be.

Why? Because it is our dreams which drive our actions. In Proverbs we read: "as a man thinks in his heart so is he." George Bernard Shaw said, "Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine, and you create what you will." William Arthur Ward said "If you can imagine it, you can achieve it; if you dream it, you can become it."

Do you want a year filled with kindness and love, a year of healed relationships, of achievement and self-growth? You can make that happen. Do you want a year in which there is less vitriol in the public dialog? More honesty? Respect for minorities? It begins with you. Do you want to see an Israel that is Jewishly pluralistic and uplifts all its citizens, Jew and Arab, a strong Israel that has a secure and flourishing future? Again, it's up to you.

The person who looks at a challenge and says "I can do this" and the one who looks at the same challenge and says "I can't do this!" – they are both right. The person who says "I just cannot imagine that happening to me..." well, guess what? It won't. Because you are already creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Your life does not have to stay the same. Your world does not have to stay the same. It all depends on your ability to dream big, to see beyond the current reality.

We all come to synagogue on these High Holidays to ask that God should grant us blessings in the coming year. But you know what? Like that ram caught in the thicket, the blessings are already there for us to actualize. God has already provided them. All we have to do, like Abraham, is look for them. All we have to do is look – not with our eyes but with our minds and our hearts. To use our imagination to see not the world as it is but the world as it should be. If we can see it, if we can dream it, we can achieve it.

For most of his life, Shimon Peres was a controversial figure in Israel. Depending on where you are on the political spectrum and the realities of the moment you either loved him or scorned him. But in the end, all of Israel came to love him for this one singular quality that set him apart: the capacity to dream, to constantly be imagining a better tomorrow.

In 2014, in addressing Congress when he received the Congressional Gold Medal, Shimon Peres concluded his remarks with these words:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I leave you today with one piece of advice. It is the advice of a boy who dreamed on a kibbutz who never imagined where his blessed life would take him. When

Theodore Herzl said: "If you will it, it is no dream." He was right. Looking back on the life of Israel, our dreams proved – Not to be too big – But too small.

Because Israel achieved much more than I could have ever imagined. So I ask only one thing of you, the United States of America, this mighty nation of dreamers. Don't dream small. You are great. Dream big. And work to will those dreams into a new reality. For you and all humanity."

I say to you on this Rosh Hashanah, *you are great. The Jewish people are great.* We are a people of dreamers. Dream big. Dream big. Do not accept yourself as you are, dream of who you can be. Do not accept the world as it is. Dream of the world as it should be, and make it your life's work to realize those dreams.

In the coming year, may we realize our dreams, and may they bring us true blessing.