

Band-aids and Kisses – Rosh Hashanah 5766  
*Rabbi Zoë Klein*

Dearly beloved,  
We are gathered here this evening  
To join in holy matrimony  
Faith Horowitz and Sholom Myers.

Faith, Sholom,  
*Bruchim Habaim*,  
Blessed are you  
As we stand here,  
under this *huppah*,  
This marriage canopy.

It is only the sketch of the home  
You will build together,  
Instead of stucco and stone,  
The *huppah* has no walls  
Upon which to hang mirrors,  
Or curtains to separate us from the world,  
Instead of thick wooden beams,  
It has only four poles  
Which would fall in a heap  
without hands to hold them.  
Instead of a tile roof  
Only your great grandfather's  
Whisper-thin *tallit*,

The *huppah* is easily **lifted and carried**.  
Sling it over your shoulder like a stick and bandana  
and you're ready to relocate,  
to follow the buffalo at the change of the season  
to migrate south with the wild geese  
to shepherd your flock to grassy plains,  
to catch a red eye and close a deal in London  
to pack your quilts and photographs  
and evacuate your home in Chatsworth  
Under an ash filled sky.  
The collapsible *huppah* is ready to relocate  
To evacuate at the threat of hurricane  
To take your place in fifteen hours of traffic  
If you even have a car,  
Before the water moves in...  
To pack your home  
Pack your synagogues

And unbury your dead in your cemeteries  
In order to resettle outside of Gaza  
Taking everything  
before the Arab neighbor moves in...  
The *huppah* is just like the *sukkah*  
The desert booth  
That the Israelites **lifted and carried**  
All through their wanderings  
From Egypt.

The huppah teaches us to pack light,  
Not just to pack lightly,  
But pack light...

Close to midnight  
Two million people  
Were told to pack in haste  
And evacuate their homes.  
Some took flour,  
Others took water,  
They didn't have time for the bread to rise,  
So they ate flatbread  
And left the fluff at home,  
And nearly half of them  
took timbrels.

We know they packed timbrels  
Because Torah says the women danced with timbrels  
At the shore of the Red Sea.

I heard once of a class  
where a young student proposed  
that the Israelites in fact  
did not take their timbrels.  
Rather, when they emerged out of the waters alive  
Their joy was so great  
That they were able to sing and dance  
To the loud and quick thump  
That was the drumming of their hearts.

That vital, steady metronome  
Which lets us know we aren't dead yet.

By taking their timbrels they were packing light,  
Packing lightness, packing levity,  
Toting along the remote possibility of joy,

If not now,  
Months from now,  
Years from now,  
The impracticability of song  
Was as important as flour.

We try to prepare ourselves,  
To know in advance what we will need...  
Flashlight,  
Earth quake kit,  
Generator,  
Extinguisher,  
Bomb shelter,  
Second story ladder,  
Evacuation plan,  
Fire drill,  
Can opener,  
Panic button,  
Box of matches,  
Power bar,  
Epi-pen,  
Flare,  
Ice pick,  
Pepper spray,  
Rubber raft,  
Full tank,  
Garlic clove...

But at the same time we know  
That there are some things  
For which we cannot prepare physically,  
That sometimes we are side swiped, blind-sided,  
By a bad driver on the highway,  
Bad news at the hospital,  
Bad weather,  
Bad turn of events...  
These are the very things  
That we prepare for at this season,

We make a checklist  
Of items necessary in a disaster kit,  
Also, we make a *heshbon nefesh*  
A checklist of the soul.  
We protect ourselves  
By checking our oil,  
And protect ourselves by

checking our *mezuzah*...  
By being concerned also  
With the sacredness of our coming and going.  
Pack everything we need  
For a good and safe trip,  
And do *teshuva*,  
Repentance,  
[*teshuva* which literally means to return,]  
Pack everything for a good and safe trip  
And do *teshuva* to be sure,  
No matter what happens,  
That you have already *returned*.

A young woman  
In a coma  
While her husband and parents fought over  
Prolonging her death or preserving her life  
Silently taught us all this year the importance of  
Making plans  
And talking about them.  
Being prepared.

We need to be ready for when God forbid disaster strikes,  
And we need to be ready, every day, to meet our God.

Pack aspirin for your heart,  
**timbrels** for what your heart beats for.

A marriage begins in a *huppah*,  
A rickety structure with no foundation,  
Airbags or floatation devices,

And yet inside, you feel warmly cocooned,  
Firmly grounded,  
the structure you are creating  
far from temporary,  
The moment doesn't fleet,  
It feels like forever.  
You are Adam and Eve  
In a Garden bed,  
Not imagining you'll ever  
Evacuate Eden.

In the *huppah*

We learn that there is an invisible structure  
Within a home,  
Made up not of mortar and bricks  
But moments like this,  
Moments you connect,  
Moments you kiss.

We build our houses in space  
And pray they weather the storms  
But when we build our palaces in time,  
We know they will weather eternity...

The man wading in neck high waters  
Pulling a garbage bag  
Of all his rescued possessions,

Is like Isaac walking up the mountain  
Beside his father Abraham,  
What will he build with what he has left,  
Isaac trudges,  
Hunched over like the image of Atlas  
Who carries the whole world on his back,  
What he carries is his destiny,  
The substance of his end  
Or his salvation.  
What will he build with the lumber of his life,  
A tavern or a temple,<sup>1</sup>  
And what will you build  
With the lumber of yours,  
When you lay down the baggage  
And sort it all out.  
And what does it matter if it can all be washed away,  
And what choice do we have anyway  
When we are Isaac  
And the man walking beside us is carrying a knife  
And feels he is under  
orders from God...  
Or the crocodile  
Beneath the surface  
Has been implanted  
With instinct to kill.

When a mouse is confronted with a cat,<sup>2</sup>  
There are very few options

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<sup>1</sup> From a poem

<sup>2</sup> I learned this from a presentation by Ben Pomeranz at our Temple

The mouse can get eaten,  
Or the mouse can run away,  
Or, there is a third option...  
When the mouse has already been spotted,  
And it's too late to run,  
The mouse can play dead...

When we're confronted with  
Tremendous fear,  
Whether it be national terror,  
Or privately, in the doctor's office  
Receiving a diagnosis,  
We are the mouse  
And the cat is baring its teeth,  
We run from it,  
Or, we are bitten and killed,  
Or, we're paralyzed with fear,  
Stunned. We play dead.  
Hoping the horrible thing  
Will lose interest in us.  
One of the differences though between  
Us and the mouse,  
Is that once the immediate danger has passed,  
Some of us have the tendency  
To continue to play dead.  
To be afraid to board a plane,  
Or enter a crowd,

Some psychologists say  
That the simplest solution to this  
Is touch,  
to feel one's heartbeat  
to remember the rhythm of the dance of living.

That vital, steady metronome  
Which lets us know we are alive.

It is all in the mystery of the kiss.  
A child knows this,<sup>3</sup>  
A child says,  
"Kiss it and make the hurt go away,"  
The Bandaid protects the body  
By covering the hurt  
And the kiss plants a seed of healing  
Underneath the skin

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<sup>3</sup> Naomi Levy

Which gently stills  
A shaken soul.

In the wake of Katrina  
We did not see that contact,  
Neither the Bandaid,  
Nor the kiss,

Katrina was a natural disaster  
That interrupted a social disaster,<sup>4</sup>  
Where people were waiting for a kiss  
Long before this...

The rabbis say it took Noah 120 years  
To build his vessel,  
Nail by nail,  
Plank by plank  
He followed his Heavenly Advisor,  
And in a hundred and twenty years it never crossed his mind  
To try to avert God's decree<sup>5</sup>  
To save the world from destruction,  
A hundred and twenty years is significant,  
It is an ideal lifetime,  
Traditionally we say at birthdays,  
*Ad meah v'esrim*,  
May you live 'til one hundred and twenty...  
How much of one's lifetime is spent  
Building for oneself  
Instead of for others?

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<sup>4</sup> article

<sup>5</sup> Why are we Jews not considered to be the descendants of Noah but rather of Abraham, while the rest of the world is referred to in our literature as "the children of Noah"? The explanation is that even though Noah was righteous and perfect in his actions, he was not the ideal righteous Jew. "Noah walked with God," not with people, he was not interested in humanity, in the environment. His righteousness was directed inward, to himself and his family. He was what is known in Yiddish as a *tzaddik in peltz* – a "righteous man in a fur coat." He was commanded by God to build an ark – he built it board by board and nail by nail, for a hundred and twenty consecutive years, and it never crossed his mind that there might be a way to avert God's decree and to save the world from destruction. – *Itturey Torah*

R. Menahem Mendl of Kotzk explains further about a *tzaddik in peltz*: when one is cold at home, there are two ways to become warm – one can heat the home or get dressed up in one's fur coat or other warm clothes. The difference between the two is that in the first case the entire house is warm and everyone in it feels comfortable, whereas in the second case only the person wearing the coat feels warm, whereas all the other people continue to freeze. – *Iturey Torah*

How much time do we waste  
Plastering Band-aids over the surface of things  
Band-aids that won't hold when the waters rush in.

120 years to warn people...  
The Asian tsunami took four hours to reach southern India,  
And nine months later the American Gulf Coast  
Was hit by a different disaster,  
but the face is the same.  
And the questions are the same,  
Why didn't we heed warnings before 9-11,  
Why didn't the S'ri Lankans receive warning that a tsunami was coming,  
Or the Somalians in the eight hours it took to reach them,  
Why weren't the people in Mississippi,  
The poorest state in our nation,  
And Louisiana, the second poorest,  
Evacuated properly?

They've all been waiting for a kiss  
Long before this.  
Band-aids  
And food stamps  
To cover the hurt  
And hide its ugliness  
From the rest,  
The elderly  
Of St. Rita's nursing home,  
waited for help that never came,  
at least 31 drowned,  
robbed of the sweet goodnight kiss  
that on our very last day  
should take our breath away.  
But the elderly have been waiting for a kiss  
Long before this,  
Long before being left behind on highway overpasses,  
Long before a bus of elderly exploded fleeing hurricane Rita,  
Long before this  
they've gotten bandages to cover the bedsores, instead of love.<sup>6</sup>  
We think in Band-aids,  
Not in kisses,  
We hide our pain  
Instead of exposing it,  
for fear that it will be met  
with horror instead of heart.

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<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Dayle Friedman

The word for kiss in Hebrew  
Is *neshika*  
And the word for weapon  
Is *neshek*,

We don't think in *neshikot*,  
We think in *neshekim*,

If we thought in kisses  
We wouldn't have a mother  
With tens of thousands  
Of followers in Washington  
Begging for some contact,  
Begging for more than a Bandaid  
Over the loss of her son,  
Begging to be told, in person,  
That her son didn't die  
Chasing 99 red balloons  
Over Iraq.  
She sits in jail  
Waiting for some kiss  
To take the hurt away.

A world of only Band aids  
Is a lonely world.

A flood emphasizes loneliness,  
It separates people,  
Leaving every man an island...  
The images of the people,  
The poor and the elderly,  
Left on their rooftops,  
Hands reaching up to the sky  
Begging for help,  
Begging not to be forgotten,  
Must remind us  
Of the people in the Sudan,  
Refugees of genocide  
Trying to survive on a land  
Nearly as barren as Mars,  
Where two million people were displaced  
With nowhere to go,  
No family or friends  
Or second home or even shelters,  
Where the UN even ceased supervision  
Of humanitarian aid

Citing inability to provide security  
For aid workers.  
The people of Sudan evacuated into  
One of the poorest countries in the world,  
With nothing to offer.  
Must remind us of  
The 3.6 million in Niger  
Who are near starvation  
Because of a plague of locusts,  
One and a half million of them toddlers,  
And they don't cry out  
"where is our help"  
And demand response  
Because no one is listening.  
Must remind us of those  
Whose sufferings are among the most forgotten  
On all the Planet Earth,  
Hands reaching up,  
Bellies distended,  
Arms and legs like matchsticks,  
Begging for help,  
For rain,  
And no helicopter  
Or media chopper  
Or cloud  
Will ever appear for them  
In their unforgiving sky...  
We are all connected,  
And if we spend one hundred and twenty years rebuilding  
That gem of an historic city New Orleans,  
It needs to cross our minds  
To also save the rest of the world from destruction.

Just a few days ago the governor vetoed the  
historic marriage equality bill  
that was passed by the California legislature.  
And what do gay marriages have to do with  
Poverty and Katrina, Tsunamis and Sudan?  
It is just more evidence that  
We don't think in kisses,  
When we limit they way people love  
There is no love.

Our constitution says that people  
"are endowed by their Creator  
with certain inalienable rights,

that among these are life, liberty,  
and the pursuit of happiness.”

No country in the history of the world  
Has ever cared about happiness,  
It is such a ridiculously romantic vision  
For a country...  
The English,  
The Soviets,  
The Saudi Arabians  
Had no doctrine  
Concerned with happiness,  
It is so silly and wonderful,  
A lollipop in the library  
Of international affairs,  
But to think someone else's happiness  
Is bad for marriage... means we think  
marriage itself is not fabulous  
Creative and dynamic,  
But fragile and threatened,  
An empty huppah  
Easily blown over.  
There are threats to marriage...

Alcohol.  
Drugs.  
Fists.  
Lies.  
Undiagnosed depression.  
Closed mindedness.  
Greed.  
Silence.

Honor for the California legislature that passed the bill.  
Shame on the girly one with the red stamp.

We don't think in kisses.  
But bandstands,  
One hundred and twenty years he worked on that ship.  
How much of one's lifetime is spent  
Building for oneself  
Instead of for others  
Building toward elections  
Instead of building levees?

We don't think in kindness

But bandwagons,  
Someone sent me an email  
About Roe versus Wade  
Being more than two ways to get out of New Orleans.  
If God forbid our daughters face  
One of the most profound,  
Physically and emotionally frightening  
Decisions in their precious lives,  
They need embracing,  
Not back alley Band-aids.  
We need to think in kisses.  
To stop putting Band-aids  
To cover up that the ocean is a few degrees warmer.  
It is the world's birthday.  
We can say we have nothing to do with the weather,  
The same way we had nothing to do with the ice age,  
But when we are in love  
It is just a fact that  
The moon shines brighter,  
We need to think in lovingkindness,  
Toward each other  
And all creation  
Even though Creation  
Has proved so much stronger than us,  
We are all connected,

The number of times we look up  
Before we see the polluted sky,  
The number of ears we have  
Before we hear people cry,  
The number of deaths it takes  
Before we know too many people have died,  
It's all connected,  
It's all blowing in the 150 mile per hour  
Category five hurricane winds.

We need to pack our Band-aids,  
And Benadryl  
And Bacetracin,  
But also kisses.  
Kisses need to be part of the plan.

Or we end up like Snow White  
In her glass coffin,  
Waiting for the poisoned apple to be dislodged,  
Playing dead.

May I have the rings?

There is a Jewish tradition  
To plant a cedar tree at the birth of a boy  
And a cypress at the birth of a girl.  
Branches from those trees  
Would then be used to make the poles  
Of their *huppah*.  
When a Jewish baby is named we say,  
*K'shem she' tikanas l'brit,*  
*Kein tichanes l'Torah, l'huppah, u'l'ma'asim tovim.*  
Just as you've entered the covenant,  
So may you enter a life of *Torah* – wisdom,  
Of *huppah* – love, and *ma'asim tovim* – good deeds...

The preparation starts early  
The seeds are planted right in the beginning  
To build that rickety structure  
Of promises and hope.

It doesn't happen right away.  
It takes time,  
And sowing,  
Pruning  
And praying,

And assuredly,  
When we start early  
And work diligently,  
Comes the flowering,  
As a temple we collected tens of thousands  
After the Asian tsunami,  
We've helped create a vital  
Reform community  
In *Mevasseret Tziyon*, Israel.  
Which is so important,  
The people of that community  
Were there helping the evacuees of Gaza  
Resettle, building toward a future of peace.  
We passed out coffee cans  
in our preschool and religious school  
to collect money  
For the Jewish World Watch  
To help the refugees in Chad,  
Two classes had bakesales,

And where did that money go?  
It went to build a medical clinic,  
Which opened its doors two days ago,  
And already hundreds have come,  
And already a mother  
Who had been in labor 36 hours  
Arrived,  
And finally delivered her baby girl  
With a cord around her neck,  
And they had the equipment  
To help that baby live,  
Plant a cypress for that infant girl,  
Give her a kiss.  
We helped do that.

And it is not just money,  
We have at Temple Isaiah a Mitzvah Mall ~  
Community service opportunities you can participate in,  
In lieu of buying gifts.  
We have our social action committee,  
And caring community committee  
Which reaches out to people  
In our own congregation,  
And our Green Team,  
All of which you can join...  
And all the extraordinary outreach  
Of our religious school  
To people in need in our own city.

Remember what your heart beats for.  
The world is a shattered glass,  
And it is a holy obligation  
To piece it back together,  
And people think that the shattering of the glass  
Is to remind you that the world is broken  
But it is more than that,  
It is to tell you  
At the moment you declare your love,  
To apply your love outward as well as inward,  
To let it break free of yourselves,  
To use what you've discovered  
In each other,  
What you've awakened  
In each other,  
To help repair the world outside you,  
Not just with Band-aids,

But with the power of your hopefulness,  
Commitment and devotion,  
To help heal beneath the skin,  
The world's shaken soul,  
The shattering of the glass  
Tells us what the purpose of love is,  
To get people out of slavery,  
Just as we say God's love  
Brought us out,  
And it is a holy occupation,  
The fireman holding the child,  
The soldier carrying the infant,  
Are my rabbis,  
Holding *Torah* scrolls,  
They walk toward the clinics  
Like we walk our *hakafot*  
And I wish we could reach across space  
And kiss the tree of life in their arms.  
The rescue worker  
Wiping his furrowed brow  
Is my cantor  
Praying *Kol Nidre*.

The shattering of the glass  
Is the heartbreak of the world,  
Calling out from beneath your heel,  
From beneath your foot,  
"Careful where you tread,  
When you are loving on high  
Remember me down low,  
When you build,  
Don't step on me,  
Draw me too under your *huppah*,  
Make me a part of your quest for eternity.  
Embrace me with your grandfather's tallit,  
Make room in your love for me.  
The *huppah* is the sketch of your future home,  
When you build it, include me."

The shattering of the glass is not a reminder,  
But a charge...

USE your love,  
You can affect change,  
USE your love  
Because marriage is not between man and woman,

It is between you and the world...  
One day you may make a commitment to one other,  
But every day you make a commitment to all others.

Do you take faith to be your partner  
And peace to be your guide,  
And do you congregation of Israel,  
Take a look outside your *huppah*'s open walls  
To see all the people there  
Looking to you with wide eyes,  
Do you care about treating them with kindness,  
Do you want to offer them caring,  
And say to them *hineini*,  
Here I am,

I do.  
I do.

Do you?

BY the power vested in me  
I now pronounce you  
Helpers and healers,  
Partners in creation,  
Stewards of the earth.

\*Step on the glass\*

*Mazal tov...*

You may now kiss the hurt and make it go away.