

On Yom Kippur we reflect. I am so grateful for the richness of my Jewish heritage and identity. It has given me a spiritual foundation that has allowed me to deal with life's tragedies as well as triumphs. Every one of us deals with life's tragedies and enjoys life's triumphs.

My father's father and mother fled from Belarus (White Russia) to Berlin at the turn of the last century. My grandfather studied voice at the Berlin Conservatory of Music and later became a tenor. They emigrated to the United States from Germany right before World War I in 1914. My grandmother was pregnant with my father on Ellis Island while also taking care of three other children. Singing on the stage was not sufficient regular work to support the family. A great opportunity to become a cantor of a reformed congregation in Manhattan Beach near Coney Island in Brooklyn New York became available. He stayed there until his retirement as "Cantor Emeritus" in 1954. He was a true "Maggeed". My last name "Magidson" is derived from the Hebrew word "Maggeed" which is an itinerant rabbi who travels from village to village carrying news and stories. My Grandfather's love for his congregation and their love for him was powerful. I remember he always was elegantly dressed to go to the synagogue. One of my recollections of his attire was his spats, a fancy shoe cover. My father after marriage and the birth of three sons moved to Southeast Washington DC for employment after World War II. When his father died in 1961, he went to the synagogue every day for a year to say the mourner's Kaddish. When they were short of a minyan and we were not there, he would call us up and his sons would come so that the service would commence.

My mother's parents came from Galicia, a former Kingdom that straddles modern-day Poland and Ukraine in the early 1900s. They met in the lower East side of New York City as their villages were near each other in the Old Country. Grandpa was a poor Tailor who had four daughters. Their life parallels the script from "Fiddler on the Roof". Instead of Tevye the milkman, he was Isadore the tailor. The family was very orthodox. Men sat separately from women in the congregation. Religious holidays were scrupulously observed. The family was very close but had little money. His beliefs provided much comfort for him and his family.

My parents once they were in the new DC area neighborhood, helped form a great Jewish community with other similarly situated families who came to DC after World War II for employment. They helped build a new sanctuary for the Temple and participated in many of the congregational activities for all the family. Our family moved to suburban Maryland in 1956 and we joined a wonderful Jewish community in Silver Spring. In 1961, My twin brother and I celebrated our b'nai mitzvah. This accomplishment was achieved after many years at Hebrew school and lessons with the cantor learning Jewish rituals and traditions. Later at the University of Maryland, I joined a Jewish fraternity where I made life long friends.

44 years ago, I move to Houston to attend law school. Houston was a very different town in 1973 from Washington DC. The hottest news on TV was Marvin Zindler's expose 'of the "Chicken Ranch" in La Grange Texas. The story later became the basis for the Broadway musical, "Best Little Whorehouse in Texas". I was not quite prepared for the culture, heat and humidity that Houston offered. However, the warmth and welcoming nature of the people of Houston was greatly appreciated. With few acquaintances, I found Beth Israel under the leadership of Samuel Karff. The High Holiday services, since my first year, have always been inspirational and my lifeline to the community and my Jewish identity.

After law school, I became an Assistant District Attorney in Harris County. I have been a State and Federal Prosecutor in Houston for my entire career. I have learned to work closely with members of the judiciary, law enforcement agencies and the defense bar, some of whom are members of the

congregation. To be successful in this environment is to earn trust in your words and deeds. Listening to the defense attorney plead his defense helps to insure that justice is being done. Working closely with law enforcement insures that you bring the most thoroughly investigated case to court. Always accurately represent your case in front of the judiciary. Not only is it the right to do but it also brings integrity to you and the system. Carol Vance, the former Harris County District Attorney who hired me, told me that all your decisions made in the legal profession should be made as if Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes", was in your face with his camera crew. A right decision is always easy to defend.

I have been blessed to be asked by Governor Rick Perry to become the Harris County District Attorney to fill the unexpired term of Chuck Rosenthal in 2008. This was not an easy decision for my family and me. First of all, I was currently an Assistant United States Attorney and it would require me to put my federal career on hold and possibly jeopardize my health and retirement benefits. Between the Department of Justice, the State of Texas, Harris County and my US Attorney and me, a memorandum of understanding was completed and I took office in March 2008. My decision was also difficult because of the circumstances surrounding the need to fill the unexpired term. Racial and sexual emails on the DA's computer became public due to a Court Order in a civil rights case in federal court. This caused the sitting District Attorney to resign and deeply hurt morale and the effectiveness in the office. I felt at the time that if I could bring back the mission of justice that we were on and establish the public trust, than I must do it to the best of my abilities. Remember, I worked for a department of an ideal where your only duty everyday was to insure that justice was being done. The enthusiastic welcome and the tremendous response by the office to our rededication to our core mission of justice made me proud to take on this responsibility.

In 2011, upon nomination of the President of the United States, Barack Obama, and the consent of the Senate, I was sworn in as the 22nd United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas. This judicial district not only encompasses the entire Houston metropolitan area but includes all of South Texas from Laredo to Brownsville and up the coast to Galveston. During all my time in both state and federal court, I have seen how the judicial system deals with individual cases and all their related issues. From organized crime, including drug trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, extortion and murder to white collar crime involving perpetrating fraud on family, neighbors, friends and business associates. Having to balance my public duties and family life was difficult. All of us know the importance of family and I always strove to achieve that balance. With federal courtrooms all over South Texas, and the largest criminal docket in the United States, my time and what I did with it was crucial in living as balanced a life as I could.

On March 10, 2017, a Friday afternoon at around 3:30 pm, I received a call from a close friend and attorney. She asked if I was watching CNN? I answered "no". She said, "I think you have been fired". I said that "it couldn't be as no one has contacted me". She said "turn on CNN". So I did and the story was gone. However, I looked it up on the internet and there it was. The President had asked for all 39 Presidentially appointed United States Attorneys to resign that day by midnight. It was from a press release from the Department of Justice. I called the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys, our administrative arm in DC. I spoke to the director who apologetically said it was true and the Acting Deputy Attorney General was on the phone now calling the affected US Attorneys. Knowing that the administration would soon be making changes, I had already plan an April 30, 2017 resignation. Each administration handles their resignations of appointees differently. However the abruptness of the decision and its timing, made me vulnerable to lost benefits. Dealing with bureaucracy is never easy

even for those inside the system. I found persistence to be a great asset. Eventually everything worked out. By the way, I received the phone call at 7:30 pm that night while at dinner with my family.

I have seen firsthand the failure of human beings. However, what my Jewish heritage has taught me is that there is hopefulness and redemption in all our lives. In every case I have prosecuted, there has been a moment of truth for those about to commit a crime. Should I say something to someone or close my eyes and join in thinking I can rationalize my conduct? To honor the ideal of justice on a daily basis has allowed me to bring into practice many of our Jewish tenets. Judaism has helped shape my beliefs in what is right and what is wrong. All my legal career and my case related decisions have been founded on accountability for one's acts balanced with fairness and compassion. My Judaism gives me the foundation to handle all of life's tragedies and enjoy fully all of our triumphs. People make decisions every day to succeed or disappoint. My strong commitment to Judaism and its teachings, allows me to appreciate the righteousness of G-D's justice tempered with his mercy and compassion. The Yom Kippur service brings all of us close to the godliness of our universe and we are all blessed for this. Amen.