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Many of you know that I'm a big Yankees fan (not that there's been much to be a fan of this season...). I grew up in the 80's when the Yankees were struggling in the bottom of the AL East and the Mets were the hotshot team that attracted all the fair-weather fans. Dwight Gooden and Daryl Strawberry reigned supreme and I spent many years commiserating with Juan Martinez, the only other die-hard Yankees fan in my grade. I watched with bated breath when Andy Pettitte pitched a miraculous 1-0 victory in game 6 of the 1996 World Series to send the Yankees back to New York up 3 games to 2 over a dominant Atlanta Braves team. I went nuts watching from Jerusalem in 2011 as Derek Jeter sent a home run to left for his 3000th base hit. And I proudly helped our son Tzvi make his 5th grade tallit with the core four – Jeter, Pettitte, Posada, and Rivera – each emblazoned on one of the corners. Indeed, Aimée and I raised three Yankees fans in Philadelphia, and our children had to endure taunts – and worse – when the Yankees played the Phillies in the 2009 World Series. Thankfully, we won.

One aspect of watching a Yankees game – or, indeed, just about any sporting event on TV these days – is the incessant ads for sports betting sites that have popped up everywhere in the past few years, ever since the 2018 Supreme Court decision striking down previous limits on sports betting outside of a very limited number of venues, and throwing open the doors to betting sites like DraftKings, Bet 365 Sportsbook, and Caesars. Even ESPN is getting in on the action and has just announced a partnership with a sportsbook company worth billions of dollars; the ubiquitous spread of sports betting is only going to increase. Leave aside for the moment that many of the sites I mentioned have engaged in deceptive marketing practices by promising 'free bets' when they're simply giving you credit to gamble on their site, or that several have been cited for marketing their products to impressionable college kids in direct violation of federal law. Also overlook for the moment the alarming rise in gambling addiction with one in forty Americans suffering from problematic compulsive gambling, as people are constantly courted and prodded to place bets directly from their phones. This sermon isn't actually an old-time diatribe against the evils of gambling. In fact, this isn't even a sermon about gambling at all.

Rather I want to talk about one of the sports betting sites in particular, the highly popular FanDuel site with its seductive slogan 'Make Every Moment More.' It's a powerful and well-crafted message: *make every moment more*. Who wouldn't want that? A world in which the colors are a little brighter, the sound of the bat on the ball a little crisper, the jolt of adrenaline when your favorite player gets a clutch hit amplified by the fact that you've just won \$150. *Make every moment more*.

So I have to tell you: despite how well crafted this message is or maybe because of it, I had an intensely negative reaction the very first time I heard it. For one, it seemed to me you should be able to enjoy the ups and downs of a football or basketball or hockey game without having to artificially pump it up by trying to inject added stakes in the form of a bet you have riding on the outcome. And the next part of that reaction was: *why isn't every moment already enough?* Obviously any advertising campaign anywhere is built on the premise that there's something you lack – a fancy enough car, white enough teeth, fresh enough smelling laundry – and that you can only address that thing that's making you unhappy (even if you didn't know it *was* making you unhappy until you saw the ad) by buying a certain product. But there was something in me that had a visceral reaction to *make every moment more*, as if the commodity they wanted you to be dissatisfied with was life itself, as if they were suggesting that life as it is isn't rich or meaningful or 'more' enough unless we enhance it through placing a bet.

I think part of the reason I reacted so negatively to the slogan is that Judaism is built on the idea of upholding the inherent value of the everyday. We recognize and celebrate the highs, but not at the expense of demeaning the lows or even the commonplace. We see this intention in the prayer recited three times a day thanking God for the miracles that are with us each and every day, morning, noon, and night; or in the blessings we are commanded to recite on actions as seemingly mundane as eating food or hearing the sound of thunder. Judaism believes the everyday has intrinsic – and perhaps even ultimate – value: after all Rosh ha-Shanah celebrates the anniversary of Creation, a Creation Judaism teaches us is renewed each and every day. In the Genesis account at the conclusion of each day God looks at what was created and declares that it is good. *Good*. God doesn't look at the creation of light, or plants, or animals and say: Behold this is *meh*, it's OK. Judaism teaches that Creation is built on and shot through with *goodness*, and part of our sacred task as Jews is to affirm and celebrate that goodness wherever it exists; and in those places where it doesn't we're supposed to partner with God to bring the world closer to the Creation God desires – one where people uphold the values of dignity, love, justice, and peace.

Saying we need to make each moment *more* implies we should be dissatisfied with the moments we have right now, and that's a recipe for disappointment. It suggests that unless every moment is a high, unless every moment is unforgettable, then somehow we have failed to lead a great life. Over the course of the past year I have been reading a series of very moving reflections by Sarah Wildman, a wonderful writer and mother of two who chronicled her teenage daughter's, unfortunately unsuccessful, battle with liver cancer. Reflecting on the fact that her daughter's grueling medical treatments meant the family had to take their joys and measured successes where they could find them, she writes: "Don't look for every moment to be a 10... Sometimes you have to celebrate the fours, fives and sixes."

*Don't look for every moment to be a 10, sometimes you have to celebrate the fours, fives and sixes.* Thank God, most of us don't find ourselves in Wildman's situation, but even so we need to realize that not every moment has to be remarkable, that we're not 'settling' when we're happy about a 5 or 6. On the contrary, we set ourselves up for failure and disappointment if we create unrealistic expectations about how every moment will be a peak one, especially since we know that the vast majority of life consists of commuting, work, shopping for groceries, putting out the recycling, and the million other mundane but indispensable tasks on which our lives are built. Those moments are perhaps not as 'high' as sitting on a beach sipping a frozen drink, but that does not make them worthless, or even unworthwhile. For many of us, there will be times – sometimes significant stretches of time – that aren't tens, aren't even sixes, fives, or fours – but ones or twos. People we love get sick, people we love suffer and decline. As the liturgy of this day reminds us, we do not know who will live in the coming year and who will die, who in the fullness of years and who before. For those caring for someone sick, those dealing with the aftermath of the death of a loved one, those suffering from depression, a day that is a three or a four is worthy of celebration, having a regular day of errands and cooking and cleaning can feel like a gift, even a triumph.

Against this backdrop, you can see how the idea of feeling you need to make every moment more – to shoot for tens and denigrate the 'mere' sixes and sevens – can feel like an unfair and maybe even irresponsible expectation and why I recoiled from that FanDuel slogan. Then I read a piece by someone who wasn't a gambler, a New York Times reporter who was covering the proliferation of sports betting sites by creating several accounts and placing bets. She wrote that unexpectedly she found herself – a non-sports fan – totally hooked with every twist and turn as she bet relatively small amounts of money on everything from the outcome of games to whether a particular soccer player would score a goal or how many yards a particular running back would pick up in the first half. The reporter cited a friend who told her, "Betting makes uninteresting things interesting."

"Betting makes uninteresting things interesting." Now before you start reaching for your phones to check the over/under on how much longer this sermon will run (at least an hour and half) I have to say something about why this particular spin on *make every moment more* struck a chord with me. Not because I'm a bettor – I'm overall pretty risk-averse – but because I think making uninteresting things interesting is part of the beauty of Judaism. The world can often seem, as I've noted, pretty ordinary and mundane and we can get lost in the details of the everyday. But Judaism insists that that everyday is shot through with wonder – the wonder of waking up to a new day, of seeing the spring blossoms open on the trees, of a walk in the woods; to say nothing of the wonder of a looking over the ocean or watching a magnificent sunset or feeling a new baby grip your finger in its tiny, perfect fist. All of these moments are ordinary in

the sense that they happen all the time. But there is absolutely nothing ordinary or 'uninteresting' about them, and Judaism teaches us to look for, find, and appreciate the beauty and goodness in each of them.

We might do this by reciting a blessing that traces each event to and roots it in its Divine Source. We might do this by sitting in community and speaking ancient words and singing melodies that connect us to and ground us in something far larger than ourselves. We might do this by using Jewish spiritual practices to cultivate an awareness of the preciousness of the world when we keep ourselves open to all the sweetness and the pain it has to offer. And we might do this by gathering in this sacred space on this holy day where we celebrate the wonder of Creation and our place in it that calls us, in the words of Rabbi Lawrence Kusher, to awaken "to the mystery of our own existence and [so be] overwhelmed with reverence."

Judaism, in other words, gives us all the tools we need to *make every moment more* – not by artificially trying to inject it with significance by placing bets, but by realizing that every moment *already is more*, if we open ourselves up to it. We live inside the miracle of our own bodies; we are a covenant people that has overcome savage cruelty and oppression both in ancient times and modern, and has risen and thrived and partnered with God to make the world a better place; we are, each of us, created in the image of God. Judaism can help us to be present to the blessings of each moment: the way the light slants through the trees at a certain time of day, the taste of ice cream lingering on our tongue, the quality of the air right after a majestic thunderstorm. This is the moreness that is already there in each moment if we just know how to look for it.

How? How do we open ourselves? We do it by engaging with life, not by hiding from it. By connecting and being present to life rather than indulging in escapism. By being open to the people around us: their stories, their hopes and dreams, their needs, their fears. By being open to and with ourselves: by acknowledging as we are called to do at this time of year the times we have lived up to our highest values and ideals and the times we have inevitably fallen short. We are open to God: to the ineffable Source of Being that pervades and transcends the world and connects us deeply into mystery and something far larger than ourselves. We do this – and I know this may sound simplistic – by simply enjoying the baseball game you are watching for its own sake and not for the money you have riding on it. By rooting for your team to win and reveling in the drama of the pitcher looking in at the batter, the crack of the bat, the graceful defensive stop, the clutch come-from-behind hit that wins the game. Speaking for myself, I don't need my game to be more than that, don't need to be pulled out of my appreciation for the athleticism, the grit and determination, the drama and the fun of the moment by 'adding' excitement and stress by placing a parlay bet on how many errors and strikeouts will occur in the fourth inning.

During the first half of 2022 Americans placed \$8 billion dollars a month in legal sports bets, and it's estimated that this number will rise to \$20 billion dollars a month in 2026. Clearly a lot of people are drawn by the promise and excitement of making every moment more. But an awful lot of people are also going to lose an awful lot of money – in many cases, money they can't afford to lose, and a lot of people's moments are going to become *less*. And I can't help but wonder if they wouldn't do better with a sure thing: a bet on the preciousness of this world that we are blessed to inhabit, on the wonder that infuses the everyday just behind the surface, on acts of kindness that are possible when people turn toward each other in compassion and understanding, on tight hugs and the taste of a ripe strawberry, on the stirring within us when we hear the melody to Avinu Malkeinu or the sound of the shofar, on the blessed mystery of existence, on the holiness of being fully where you are and experiencing and embracing that moment – even a seemingly mundane moment – as the 'more.'

On a summer night at the ballpark with a hot dog in your hand and electricity in the air and the anticipation of the pitch coming toward the plate, and everyone on their feet waiting to see what happens next.