

The High Holy Days, for me, are a time for resetting the meters of my life. For getting in touch, if you will, with the inner meter-reader. But resetting means reflection, and reflection often means regret.

I look at my family, my two sons, Ambrose and Casey, my daughter-in-law Rebecca, and my two grand-daughters, Fiona and Chloe, and what I regret most is the dismal state of the world that I am — that we are — bequeathing to them.

No, our current crises are not new. We have walked in these shadows many times before. But we always hope that we will leave to our kids a world improved, a world healed.

I was not part of, as I'd hoped I'd be, the generation that ended war. Racism and antisemitism have not died away, as it seemed they might for a brief bright moment in the 60s. The planet still reels from toxic greed. Fascism again raises its bony face and bloody hand, in marble halls of power.

Yet passing on is something we all must do, and the world *will* belong to our children.

*Okay, kids, we say, it's your turn. Oh, and by the way, you're in debt a trillion trillion dollars, and the dollar is worth a dime.*

What does our meter say about this? For that matter, what does our *mirror* say? How can we look at ourselves, or face our children, when we once again fail at genuine *tikkun olam*?

I think we're still able to get up every morning because we expect our kids to be stronger than we were. Perhaps this perception grows from the fact that as our kids wax stronger, age steals up on us, and we wax weaker. We look at these grown people we have loosed on the world, and we almost forget the little hands we once held. This is the proper order of things.

I remember the first time I knew, really knew, my children would surpass me.

It was winter, with lots of snow on the ground. We'd come home from somewhere, late, the four of us, Polly, me, Brose, our younger son Casey. It was dark. There were halos of mist around the outside lights. Our breath clouded around us. Perhaps there was a sharp winter moon. The boys and I started fooling around in the snow. I probably started it, putting snow down someone's back. (Not Polly's. No one would be that crazy.) Anyway, we started tossing snowballs. Then Brose snuck up and put snow down *my* back. So I chased him. But...I couldn't catch him. He raced away from me like a deer, like a young wolf. I clumped along as fast as I could, but finally collapsed in the snow, and the boys collapsed on top of me, and we laughed. But this was a new thing, something physical, but behind that worldly mask was something else, something deeply of the spirit. It meant that if my boys were by my side, it was because they wanted to be. Because if they ran, I couldn't catch them.

And I was filled with a tangle, an amalgam, of emotions. It's difficult to see

one's strength waning, to know the world has grown slightly dimmer. But paramount was pride, not *wounded* pride, but pride that I *had* been beaten, outdistanced by my *son*. I was not jealous or crestfallen. I was elated.

When it was Casey's turn to outdistance me, I was ready. I knew this was a *best thing*, to be excelled by my children. I was ready and willing, happy to be overtaken and passed. That is what our children are for: to lope away from us, to take over when we falter, and when we fall — what *we* were for when we surpassed *our* parents.

So, in this matter of long-delayed *tikkun olam*, it's not that I don't trust the strength of my children, and my little grand-girls. I *do* trust their strength, and their wit, and their courage. But they have trusted me too, trusted us, to carry the baton well on *our* lap.

Have I? Have *we*?

Here, on Yom Kippur, I check the karma-meter, I reflect, and I regret, and I wonder: couldn't I have built better? Been more staunch? Acted with greater courage? Seen more clearly?

But in one small way, I know I *have* helped to improve the world, helped to make it a brighter and a sweeter place. And that is by bestowing on the wide mad world these brave beautiful children.