**All the world is a narrow bridge**
**Kol Nidrei Introduction**
**Rabbi Dan Moskovitz - 5764**

All the world is a narrow bridge, Reb Nachman of Bratslav said, a narrow bridge between the nothingness at the beginning of life and the nothingness at the end of life. We spend our whole lives on this precarious span, unaware that we are even on it. Then one day we awaken, we look down we see it, and we feel terror. We say to ourselves, My God, what have I been doing with my life, how careless have I been, how wasteful has been my journey, I am more than half way across the span and what have I to show for it, what have I really accomplish and contributed and learned. The High Holy Days are that bridge that is our life, only a *k'fitzat ha derech* / a compressed journey – a voyage from birth to death in ten days' time. Rosh Hashananh is *HaYom Harat Ha-Olam* – the birthday of the world and Yom Kippur is the day we rehearse for our own death, we wear white like a shroud, we abstain from life affirming activities like eating and sexuality, this evening this day of atonement we glimpse death, we ask the question, if my life were to end today am I prepared, have I made the most out of the life I have had to live?

In his novel *The Idiot* Dostoyevsky wrote of the time the czar played a terrible joke on him and his circle of revolutionary intellectual friends. The story goes that the czar had them all arrested. And then one morning they were awakened at dawn and told they were to be executed that very day. As Dostoyevsky rode to his own execution with his friends in an open wagon, a strange sensation began to overcome him. In a few minutes he would die, but he felt as if he had all the time in the world to do what he needed to do. What he needed to do, he now realized was to say goodbye to his comrades for the final

time. He did this in a full and leisurely way, the great love he bore his comrades welling up to the bursting point as he poured his heart out to them. Then he decided to spend his last moments on earth looking around the world for the last time. As he did he was captivated by the sun reflecting brightly off a tin roof in the distance. In an instant he knew that would be what he would be come. In a few moments he would die, and he would become this blazing radiant light. This knowledge filled him with an ecstasy so intense that he could barely contain it, that if it went on for even another minute, he wouldn't be able to bear it. Then the czar's captain told them it was all a joke. The czar had only wanted to frighten them. They wouldn't die after all. Dostoyevsky was changed forever by this experience. It showed him what he was. It took him to the core of his being and he was a different man the rest of his life.

That is what Yom Kippur asks us today. What is the core of our life? Are we living by it? Are we moving toward it?

We shouldn't wait till the moment of our death to seek the answers. At the moment of death there may be nothing we can do about it but feel regret. But if we seek the answers now, this evening, we can act in the coming year to bring ourselves closer to our core. This is the only life we have, and we all will lose it. No one gets out alive, but to lose nobly, to die with the knowledge of the core of our being to enter that moment where life is deep and rich and God is present for us. That gives the journey meaning, that give life meaning. Kol Ha olam kool gesher tzar me'od, v'hayika, lefahed klal. Our whole life is a very narrow bridge and the most important part is not to be afraid. Tonight let us hold

hands and walk that bridge together, let us ask the deep questions and let us mind our souls our hearts our very being for the answers.  We have walked for too long in darkness, we seek the light of understanding the light of a life of meaning.