I am a rabbi because of a game of catch I played at camp with a Rabbi more than three times my age. I found love and happiness and my partner in life, because my best friend and my family helped me through a very difficult time. I survived the social pressure cooker of High School because my woodshop teacher took a personal interest in my well being. I am alive today, I truly believe, because an anonymous man pulled me back from the curb as I was about to step into on coming traffic in Manchester, England.

We have all sorts of names for these people in our lives, some call them Guardian Angles, some call them Heroes, our tradition calls them *shlichim*, messengers from God, I call them Supporting Actors. A Rabbi, a Friend, Family, a Teacher, and an Anonymous man, in the movie that is my life, these are the people that have enabled me to play a staring role, these are the people, intentionally or not, that gave the trajectory of my life a nudge at just the right moment that kept it on track or steered it in a new and better direction. If awards were given to supporting actors in life, as they are given to them in the movies, then they are each deserving of the Oscar, for the role they played and for how there playing of that role enabled me to play mine.

Who are the supporting actors in your life, who are the people past or present that at critical cross roads in your life's journey gave you directions, held your hand and walked a bit of it with you? Who are the people whose bit of advice, helping hand, our out stretched arm so altered your path in life, that upon reflection, were it not for them everything would be different, and so much would not have been possible?

Supporting actors in the movies, just like in life are the unsung heroes of the larger story. For those who like a baseball analogy, and you know I love a baseball analogy, they are the other 8 players behind the pitcher that throws a no-hitter; or in football the linemen who block for the quarterback. The pitcher may get all the glory for the no-hitter, the quarterback for the touchdown pass, but without those who played a supporting role, the pitcher might have lost and the quarterback would have been sacked.

Consider for a moment that story of Joseph and his coat of many colors. Joseph, son of Jacob, grandson of Isaac, great grandson of Abraham, by all accounts a leading man in the story of the Jewish people. Aside from being the only biblical character to get his own Broadway play and award winning sound track; well Jesus got one but that was from a different book. Joseph is also in my estimation the second most pivotal person in Jewish history, the most pivotal is a man, whose name we never know and the Torah never records, but whose role as a supporting actor in one scene of Joseph's life changes the arc of Jewish history.

If you remember the story or the musical, you recall that Joseph goes out searching for his brothers who are supposed to be in the field tending the flock, he searches all the usual places but can't find them. Along the way he meets this man, whose name we never know, the man remembers seeing Joseph's brothers headed in the direction of a town called Dothan. On the anonymous man's advice Joseph seeks his brothers there and finds them. Shockingly, they are not happy to see him, they conspire against him, abuse him, threaten to kill him and eventually sell him into slavery to a band of traveling

nomads who are headed to Egypt. Arriving in Egypt; and through a series of events Joseph the boy who was looking for his brothers in a field, becomes the chief advisor to Pharaoh and ascends to the second most powerful position in all of Egypt.

Meanwhile a famine occurs in the land of Israel, and these same brothers are sent by the leader of the Israelites, there father Jacob to find food. They travel to Egypt and this time it is they who are surprised to find there brother, not only alive but in a position to help them. Joseph embraces them, asks after his father and makes all the arrangements for the entire nation of Israel to immigrate to Egypt. His position and power saves the Jewish people, and for 400 years they live will in Egypt and thrive. Then a new Pharaoh comes to power, throws the Israelites into slavery, a guy names Moses rises from amongst them, frogs, lice, boils, splitting of the Red Sea, and then the giving of the Torah and ultimately the return to Israel. And that's pretty much the story of our people, as the old joke about Jewish history goes, they tried to kill us, we survived, let's eat!

But were it not for the man Joseph met along the way, the man who told Joseph where to find his brothers, how different it all could have and would have been. And yet the man does not even get a name in our Torah, he is the supporting actor in the life of the Jewish people and our tradition treats him like an extra.

We never know in present tense which people or events will be the most instrumental and transformative in our lives, but in hindsight, nothing is more clear. Upon reflection the pieces of the puzzle and that path of our life are perfectly clear, even if they may be filled with uncomfortable observations.

The New Year in Judaism is unique from the secular New Year for one very specific reason, while on December 31st we look forward to the year that is ahead, on the 1st of Tishrei we are commanded to look backward on the year that we have left behind. Sure there are elements of planning for the future, but the emphasis and the commandment of *Heshbone HaNefesh* the examining of our soul is to look back over the year that has past and see not only what we have done or not done, but to identify those people that played a supporting role in our life thus far. When we look back over the past year form last Rosh Hashanah to this one, what were the pivotal moments of transition, who were the people who played a supporting role?

Let us not do the same in our own lives.

We need to recognize the supporting actors who have guided us on our path and pointed us in our direction. We need to recognize them not only to give them an award and to honor them for the important role that they played, we should do that, we should thank them and acknowledge them, but we need to recognize them because in doing so we become powerfully aware of how important we are in the lives of others and the power each of us has to help our friends, neighbors, even strangers achieve wholeness in life.