CUBS WIN – BUT WHAT DO THEY LOSE?
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Sometimes journalism is poetry. Yesterday morning after the Chicago Cubs won baseball's World Series for the first time in 108 years, the New York Times began is article with the following:

CLEVELAND — Throughout more than a century of baseball in America, where teams have risen to championship heights and fallen to miserable lows several times over, and where cities have lost teams, gained them and lost them again, there was always the Chicago Cubs and their futility.

Sometimes the Cubs were good. More often they were just bad. But since 1908, they had not done what so many other teams had, not even through fluke or plain luck.

The United States fought two world wars, the Soviet Union grew to dominance and then imploded, diseases were wiped off the earth and technology took us from newfangled automobiles to moon rockets and beyond — and still the Cubs could not win a World Series.

Their fans trudged in and out of Wrigley Field thousands of times over the years and came to believe the team was cursed.

But 2016 was the 108th year after their last title, and a baseball is sewn together with 108 stitches. This had to be the year.

It was.

On Wednesday night the Cubs beat the Cleveland Indians, 8-7, in a Game 7 for the ages. With that victory — yes, the following words are really true — the Chicago Cubs won the World Series.

As President Obama pointed out the following morning, the last time the Cub won the world series Mark Twain was still alive, Henry Ford hadn't perfected the assembly line, the Wright brothers were debating whether an airplane could fly from New York to Paris and sliced bread had not yet been invented. Thus is it literally true to say that for Cubs fans, their victory Wednesday night was in fact "the best thing since sliced bread"

There are moments when the world as we knew it changes and becomes a new world, unknown to us before, a world as we dreamed it.

In my lifetime, let alone in yours we have seen remarkable changes, some of which we never dreamed probable let alone possible. And then in what appears to be an instant but we know is more often incremental change that finally reaches Malcolm Galdwell's tipping point, all that we knew to be true and certain is thrown out the window and a new reality sets in.

It's for this reason that some Cubs fans actually were rooting or their team to lose Wednesday night. 86 percent of Cubs fans say there is a camaraderie amongst them that is grounded in a pride associated with rooting for a perennial loser. They say losing brings them together.

And while most did want to see the Cubs win in their lifetime, three percent of diehard Cubs fans polled said they actually don't.

Beyond the baseball where a late inning home run and a weak ground out to third base existentially changes what your team has always been. The most important question of all becomes, "Who are we then?"

For us as individuals and certainly for the Jewish people as a whole we are so often defined by our yearnings. HaTikvah, The Hope of 2,000 years.

Who are you when the dream is fulfilled, when all you hoped and prayed and worked for finally comes to fruition, now what?

While one measure of a person maybe how they handle defeat, another equally important measure is how they handle victory?

In the case of Israel 1948 was not the first time that it saw its dreams fulfilled. In 1272 BCE Joshua entered the promised land of biblical Israel. In 516 BCE the Israelites returned again from exile in Babylon to rebuild the holy temple in Jerusalem.

In both of those earlier instances, and in modern Israel today the question, 'who are we now?' was never answered well, and the protest at the Western Wall this past week, where hundreds of Reform, Conservative and progressive Jews were physically assaulted and verbally accosted for bringing Torah scrolls to the holiest of Jewish sites only shows that we are still searching for the answer.

Once the euphoria of having made it wore off, and the hard work of making the dream real set in we failed and are failing miserably.

For 700 years during the period of kings, Israel became a divided nation, north and south, Judea and Samaria. Tribalism took hold and sectarian violence ultimately was our own undoing. More than concurring armies, it was internal conflict over how to govern that forced us back into exile.

The same was true after our return and the building of the second temple. We were only able to hold it together for 500 years and then the fissures that occur in all societies became too much, the center could not hold and once again we were scattered amongst the nations.

Some Jewish historians draw parallels to these exiles with our 40 years in the wilderness of the Sinai Desert. That in each instance it is the period of crisis and longing that have been more definitive and formative for the Jewish people than their brief periods of success and self-government.

Commentators note that Torah was given in the wilderness of Sinai, because it was only there stripped of all comforts and distractions that we were humble enough and open enough as a people to see that we needed it, to take to heart its call for Social Justice and an hear a commanding voice that held us to account for our actions.

Without Egypt and the wandering in the desert – we could not appreciate the bounty of the Promised Land when we arrived. We lost it, when we forgot what we had struggled and endured to get there in the first place. When we became complacent, focussed more on what divided us than united us and stopped practicing the empathy for each other we had learned through trial and toil in the desert wanderings. It was then in our self-congratulations that we lost our way, because we didn't value how we got there.

You don't know what you've had till it's gone.

While this is certainly true, is also profoundly sad and deeply troubling. Why strive for things if, when you attain them you will only lose them by your own folly and foolishness?

Everyone knows that winning is more fun than losing. But strangely enough, winning can create its own problems. One is overconfidence and being too cocky. Unless carefully handled, winning teams and individuals can become arrogant and disrespectful to those they defeated. There is a lesson in this for whatever Party and Candidate wins on Tuesday night.

Back to the Cubs for a moment, their mantra was 'Wait till Next Year'. Baseball season would begin the first week in April and by mid-May, that was the refrain of every Cubs fan for more than 100 years. Yearning defined them, it became their raison d'être – and now many Cubs fans wonder, what are we if we are no longer perennial losers?

All of this is by way of a lesson for us in our own lives, and here I think the Jewish experience can be a guide to Cubs fans too.

Enjoy the moment, celebrate your championship, but never take it for granted and ALWAYS remember, appreciate and retell the story of how you got there. That is why the Passover seder and references to Yitziat Mitzrayim are so central to Judaism. Lessons come from the journey not arriving at the destination.

The message is universal; to my wedding couples I say, 'now that you are married, never stop dating, just don't date other people.'

If you treat every moment, every achievement as a precarious gift, a bubble resting on your hand that could burst at any moment, you will be gentle with it, you will appreciate it, and you will never take it for granted.

Some explain that this is why we break a glass at a Jewish wedding, because everything is fragile – even a love as strong as that found beneath the chuppah. In fact, couples who have been married for decades will often tell me, that they really didn't know how much they loved their partner until their relationship was tried and challenged by forces internal and external over the years.

I'm a Giants fan, and I hope the Cubs don't win the World Series again for another 108 years, but for their own sake, and by analogy for ours, I hope that next year while still savouring their victory they play like they are trying to win for the first time in 109 years. And should they become a sports dynasty – where winning happens so much more frequently than losing, then I hope they are as deserving of our admiration as winners as they were as losers.

Because if they are not, if we are not. If we do not appreciate the lessons of our hard fought victories, and the responsibilities that come with them – then even when we win, we are still losers.