Our tradition teaches that God keeps a running score card of what each of us has done over the past year. The score card has two columns, one labeled 'transgressions' and another labeled 'Mitzvot' or 'righteous acts'. As our year unfolds God writes down all of the bad and hurtful things that we have done in the Transgressions column and all of the acts of kindness, the Mitzvot in the Mitzvot column. This process goes on the entire year with God recording everything that we do in one of the two columns.

And then come this time of year, on Rosh HaShannah ten days prior to Yom Kippur, God sits down with all of the cards and starts to tally them up one by one.

God first turns to the column labeled transgressions, where all of our errors in judgement, hurtful acts and wrongdoing have been recorded. God notes how many times we promised to do something and didn't do it. If we were ever hurtful to anyone else, if we ever lied, or cheated. If we didn't respect or care for members of our family. All of the bad things that we might have done over the year God reads very carefully. At this point, as one might imagine, God becomes very upset, because as we all know, no one of us, is without a list of transgressions. And because of our exhausting list of transgressions God begins to think, "Why did I create this people, only so they would be hurtful and mean to each other. What is the point of continuing with this experiment, maybe I should just stop it all here and start over like I did with Noah and the Ark."

In utter disgust and dejection God turns and looks to see what else was written down on the score card. Beginning to read, God's eyes are drawn to the second column labeled Mitzvot. Dejected and not expecting to see anything written here God begins to read and sees that we once help our friend in a time of need, that a few times we did random acts of kindness. Reading over our Mitzvot both big and small, God sees that we have done good things and is reminded that we are a wonderful and important creation, capable of great deeds of kindness and expressions love.

And it is at this point every year, that God arrives at a bit of a dilemma. God cannot overlook the transgressions that we have made, but at the same time God is

unable to brush aside the Mitzvot we have performed for the world. And so as our tradition teaches, for the next ten days, in fact these very ten days that lie between Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur God takes a closer look at our lives. God puts the score card aside and looks to see if what we do in these next ten days will tip the scale one way or the other. Either towards forgiveness for our transgressions because of our Mitzvot, or continued displeasure towards us because we have not tried to rectify our wrongdoings. At the end of these ten days, on Yom Kippur, God will have to come to a final decision regarding our past year.

I relate this story, not so much to give insight into how God, will spend these next ten days leading up to Yom Kippur, but more so to help us to see how we must spend them. Will we continue to be hurtful towards ourselves, our community, towards God. Or will we take the brief reprieve we have been graciously granted and make amends for our transgressions?

I trust that none of us is so confident in our actions this past year that we are prepared to arrive at Yom Kippur with our list of transgression unchanged. But how do we go about altering that list, how do we undo the hurt and wrong we have already done. As a people that has both wronged and been wronged, hurt and been hurt we know that you can never really undo a hurtful act. But then, what can we do? How can we tip the scales back in our favor?

We can start by saying we are sorry, not the kind of sorry that we throw around lightly when we bump into someone or timidly mouth as we cut someone off on the freeway, but one that is worthy of the words we use to utter it. An apology that recognizes not only how we hurt the person or group, but what it means to hurt. When one person takes out their anger on another it does not only reflect on those involved, but it reflects on all of us as a community and as God's creation. The Torah declares that we were all created, *B'tzelem Elohim,* in the image of God, and it follows that each of us was embodied with God's ability to create both happiness and sadness, to make people feel safe, or to have them shutter in fear. And is when we abuse this ability,

when we take God's blessing of our creation and us it to hurt that we receive not only check on a score card, but real pain in peoples lives. And so we ask for forgiveness, I mean we really ask for forgiveness, down on your knees I am sorry kind of asking, and maybe we tip the scales just slightly, but anyone who has ever been hurt knows that an apology, no matter how heartfelt is seldom enough to satisfy or make amends.

What God asks of us is not only sl'chot or "I am sorry's" but also Teshuvah repentance. In these ten days between Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur God asks that we take action to heal the hurt that we have created, to show we understand what we have done to others by working to undo it. And even if our transgression has been so great that they can never be undone, we must at least learn that through trying. By getting our hands dirty in the cleaning up of the mess we have created.

If we can at least make the effort to do this, then our tradition teaches God will look with favor upon us and write us and seal us into the book of life for the coming year. And then the score card doesn't matter anymore, because we have found the true purpose of our blessing, B'tzelem Elohim, and we have used the gift of our creation to bring joy where we once made pain, and their is no greater mitzvah in the world.