this new year

00:04

i want to add an extra prayer to our

00:07

liturgy

00:09

out with the old in with the new

00:14

this past year has seen such service

00:18

such sorrow we all need to find our way

00:21

to leave the past year's pain

00:24

and suffering behind us

00:27

let's make god's light shine brightly

00:30

in our lives let's welcome a fresh

00:34

new year embracing hope

00:37

and faith

00:40

at the height of the lockdown i read how

00:43

doctors struggle with how to diagnose

00:45

depression correctly now think before

00:49

the pandemic if one of us went to our

00:51

doctor and said

00:53

i hardly ever leave the house

00:56

some days i don't even bother to get

00:59

dressed

01:00

when i do go out i stay as far from

01:03

people as i can

01:05

i wash my hands obsessively

01:09

i worry constantly about getting sick

01:13

before covet 19 came into our lives i'm

01:16

pretty sure our doctor would be willing

01:18

to prescribe the antidepressant

01:22

but now if we go to our doctors with

01:23

this description of how we're living our

01:25

lives the doctor will likely

01:27

complement our diligence and tell us

01:30

that this is the best way to stay

01:32

safe and healthy jonathan did i catch

01:34

that right

01:35

right that's what the doctor would say

01:39

now some of you may have enjoyed the tv

01:41

show monk anyone ever

01:43

ever seen the show monk before it was

01:44

one of my favorite shows tony

01:46

shalhoub plays the lead role of this

01:49

brilliant

01:50

germaphobe detective named adrian monk

01:53

and that new

01:54

screening platform peacock and i get no

01:57

commercial endorsements for that okay

01:59

but this new

02:00

platform it invited tony to reprise

02:03

his role and he got back into his monk

02:07

character to give us the viewers

02:09

a glimpse of what the san francisco

02:12

detective is up to

02:13

during the coronavirus pandemic

02:17

now amongst quarantine activities

02:19

include

02:20

washing his hands vigorously

02:23

cleaning surfaces continuously

02:27

washing produce in the dishwasher

02:30

religiously

02:31

and wearing surgical gloves obsessively

02:35

on both his hands and his feet

02:39

now these are just a few of his extreme

02:42

sanitation measures resulting from his

02:44

obsessive compulsive disorder

02:46

and what i enjoyed most as i was

02:48

watching him in this this

02:50

re recreation of his character and he

02:53

stood

02:53

six feet from his colleagues during his

02:56

video conference call

03:00

he asked his uh colleagues also do any

03:02

of you have any extra hand sanitizer i'm

03:05

down to my last 12 cases

03:09

but then he explains it wasn't hoarding

03:11

because he had bought them

03:12

20 years ago

03:16

now later if you google this video you

03:18

can take a look later in the video tony

03:19

shalhoub he drops the monk

03:21

characterization he speaks

03:23

directly to the camera

03:26

he tells us i hope you're all being

03:29

careful in following the protocol

03:32

all of us are truly monk now

03:36

and then he shares last month my wife

03:40

brooke and i

03:41

came down with the virus we had

03:44

a very rough few weeks but we realized

03:48

that so many

03:49

have had it a lot worse

03:54

for most of us it's been a rough time

03:58

fortunately with notable exceptions we

04:00

realize that many

04:01

others have had it a lot worse

04:06

our new normal is a different way of

04:09

living

04:10

and if we're not vigilant life can

04:12

become depressing

04:16

one of the best definitions i heard of

04:19

depression

04:19

is a situation when we continuously

04:23

feel a sense of loss

04:27

the sense of loss is such a familiar

04:30

experience now

04:32

even if we haven't experienced the virus

04:35

ourselves

04:35

each of us knows someone who lost a

04:37

parent a spouse

04:39

a child and even if we haven't

04:41

experienced

04:42

it ourselves we know someone who's lost

04:43

a job or a business

04:46

most of us have missed significant

04:48

events that we were looking forward to

04:51

since march i've officiated at over 100

04:55

virtual ceremonies with social

04:57

distancing for brises and baby namings

04:59

bar and bat mitzvahs and weddings

05:03

our temple shalom members have missed

05:05

celebrations

05:08

some of our grandparents have missed the

05:10

births of their new grandchildren

05:13

some parents can't hug their children

05:16

and can only visit from a distance

05:19

some students missed attending school in

05:21

person

05:22

and feel detached from their friends

05:25

some students missed the ceremony the

05:28

ceremony of well-earned graduations

05:31

some students i know from the shul

05:32

graduating from college missed their

05:34

semester

05:35

studying abroad

05:38

normally today about 1200 people would

05:42

be sitting together in our sanctuary

05:44

listening

05:45

to this sermon and now we have these

05:49

wonderful

05:50

maybe 60 people are here in the

05:52

sanctuary and all those who are at home

05:54

watching streaming and those of you

05:56

sitting here in the congregation you sit

05:59

in assigned pods you have to wear

06:04

masks

06:06

and yet my hope is that this sermon

06:08

connects all of us here in the sanctuary

06:10

those watching at home

06:12

connects all of us on our first day of

06:15

this sacred holiday

06:18

the idea of doing everything with

06:20

distance

06:22

distance separating us is painful

06:26

for me the worst experience is your

06:29

rabbi has been supporting from a

06:30

distance the sick

06:33

those dying those dying their loved ones

06:39

because of covet 19 too many of us have

06:42

lost a parent

06:43

a sibling a relative or a friend

06:46

from a distance

06:50

eight funerals i officiated for

06:53

were of married couples spouses who died

06:57

within a month of one another

06:59

from a distance since march 11th i've

07:03

officiated at over

07:05

50 funerals that were coveted 19 related

07:09

from a distance with all these funerals

07:13

loved ones are only

07:14

able to mourn from a distance

07:18

social distancing during graveside

07:20

services enduring virtual shiva minyanam

07:23

is a poor substitute for how we normally

07:26

grieve

07:26

supported by our loved ones and by our

07:29

jewish community

07:32

the virus the lockdown the ensuing

07:34

economic troubles

07:36

they're not the only challenges we've

07:38

had to face

07:40

societal ills become more pronounced

07:43

during tough times i'll speak about this

07:45

more tomorrow

07:47

the incidents of senseless hatred are on

07:49

the rise both in the scourges

07:51

of anti-semitism and racism

07:55

partisan dysfunction has grown worse

07:59

people refuse to listen to one another

08:02

refuse to really hear

08:04

an opinion especially when it's not

08:06

aligned with their own thinking

08:10

this last year has truly

08:13

tried our souls we need to pray to god

08:16

out with the old in with the new

08:22

but how do we do that effectively the

08:25

pandemic circumstances are with us now

08:29

we don't know when an effective vaccine

08:31

will transition us to safer times

08:34

but judaism has an answer

08:38

hope and faith

08:42

hope and faith have been our secret to

08:45

surviving and thriving as

08:47

jews we are asked to begin

08:50

this new year with hope and

08:53

faith now let me be clear

08:57

hope is different from optimism

09:01

optimism is a thought that the future

09:04

may be okay hope

09:08

is an article of faith

09:11

hope is faith that we can strive

09:15

for good in life

09:19

now as a general i am an optimist

09:22

but i recognize that optimism isn't

09:25

enough

09:27

i also recognize that some people fall

09:29

in the trap of pessimism

09:32

the feeling that they know the future

09:35

will go badly

09:37

pessimism can lead to despair

09:42

and despair is the opposite of hope

09:46

and faith despair is a pit of darkness

09:50

we can

09:51

tumble into if we're not careful

09:55

despair happens when we believe that

09:57

striving

09:58

for better things is pointless

10:03

despair can destroy us because it leads

10:06

to darkness the opposite

10:08

of god's light in our lives

10:12

we can handle optimism we can handle

10:16

pessimism we can't

10:19

handle despair

10:23

now i want to look at the differences

10:25

most of you know i

10:26

i love baseball and i want you

10:29

even if you don't like baseball try to

10:32

to stand this for a few minutes

10:33

because i want you to imagine a baseball

10:36

game

10:37

imagine that your team is going to the

10:39

plate in the ninth inning well

10:42

behind in runs now if you're optimistic

10:45

you think to yourself my team is behind

10:48

but they still can win

10:50

and if you're pessimistic you think

10:52

they're probably

10:53

going to lose the batters go up to bat

10:58

and every possibility exists

11:01

for a different result despair

11:06

would be if the manager says to the

11:08

players don't

11:09

even bother taking a turn at bat

11:12

or giving up despair

11:16

makes loss a self-fulfilling

11:20

prophecy despair is when we say

11:23

what's the point what difference can i

11:26

possibly make

11:28

hope is very different

11:32

with hope you embrace life whether

11:34

you're a baseball player or a fan

11:36

watching the game hope for a baseball

11:39

player doesn't mean he or she knows

11:41

what's going to happen

11:43

but with hope the player goes to the

11:44

batter's box and takes their best swing

11:47

at every pitch

11:51

now as a baseball fan i probably don't

11:53

need to remind you that unlike the

11:54

majority of

11:56

you yankee fans who may be here or

11:58

watching at home

12:00

i grew up a fan of the boston red sox

12:03

and you made it recall before 2004 i

12:06

gave a sermon

12:08

and i joked how it was that being a red

12:10

sox fan was how i first

12:12

learned about faith in my childhood

12:17

there were only crushing defeats for my

12:20

team

12:20

i was so negative so pessimistic

12:24

that during the 86 world series when the

12:27

red sox looked like they're going to

12:28

beat the new york mets

12:30

i was stoic watching the game

12:33

i hardly flinched when the ball went

12:36

through bill buckner's legs

12:39

roseanne who had just begun to watch

12:41

baseball this was a year before we got

12:43

married

12:44

she turned to me at that game as we saw

12:47

that and she said how can you

12:48

possibly root for this team and she

12:52

never watched the game again

12:55

but hope and faith were still lurking

12:57

somewhere in my heart

12:59

and i remained a loyal fan

13:02

and then that late night in 2004 i

13:05

watched the red sox trail the yankees

13:08

three games to none

13:10

i know this brings some painful memories

13:12

for some indulge me

13:15

roseanne came downstairs it was very

13:17

late at night she looked at the score

13:19

she saw on the

13:20

screen the dejected fans and she said

13:23

just come to bed i certainly wasn't

13:27

optimistic

13:29

but still i said no i'll watch until the

13:33

end

13:35

until then no major league baseball team

13:37

had ever been down three games to none

13:39

in the playoffs and come back to win

13:42

the yankees had scored 32 runs to win

13:45

the first three games against my socks

13:48

it sure looked like the possibility that

13:51

a red sox win was dead

13:54

they trailed four to three going into

13:56

the bottom of the ninth inning of that

13:57

fourth game they had to score off

13:59

mariano rivera the greatest

14:01

closer in baseball history what were the

14:03

chances of that

14:06

and yet in spite of my pessimism

14:10

they tied the game and in the bottom of

14:12

the 12th inning they beat the yankees

14:15

and then they did the unfathomable they

14:16

won the next seven straight games they

14:18

became the world series champions

14:20

the first time since 1918.

14:24

now i i know this is a mundane example

14:29

but it showed me that if i had given

14:31

into pessimism

14:33

or even worse had given into despair i

14:36

would have missed

14:37

what was a sports highlight of my life

14:42

that's the power of hope and faith

14:46

the keys to resiliency

14:51

now to make up to our yankee fans to do

14:54

chuva let me quote the lyrics of the

14:57

broadway

14:58

musical damn yankees when the

15:01

odds are saying you'll never win

15:04

that's when the grin should start first

15:07

you gotta have heart

15:11

that quote is aligned with our torah

15:16

which basically says the same thing i

15:18

said this verse earlier in the day

15:20

i have put before you life and death

15:23

blessing

15:24

and curse choose life

15:27

choose life that you

15:31

and your descendants may live

15:36

how do we choose life we embrace hope

15:41

when the words of our mouths articulate

15:44

hope in the future we create the

15:45

possibility

15:47

that our descendants may live and live

15:50

well

15:52

hope and faith are the messages

15:56

of our holy day hope and faith are how

16:00

we throw

16:01

out the old and bring in the new

16:05

hope and faith are how we eliminate

16:08

feeling

16:09

powerless hope and faith are what makes

16:11

us willing to change ourselves

16:14

and willing to change the world

16:17

hope and faith are how we become

16:19

ambassadors of

16:20

love righteousness courage

16:25

and transformation

16:28

the balsam tove teaches that divine

16:31

sparks are hidden throughout creation

16:33

waiting to be liberated

16:37

this teaches that every one of us has

16:39

our unique

16:40

set of divine sparks waiting to be

16:43

revealed

16:45

it asks us to be willing to reach out

16:48

for these divine sparks

16:50

and asks you and me to be willing to

16:53

live

16:53

our lives with hope and faith

16:57

these are challenging times

17:01

we can all all of us list reasons

17:04

for despair but that's never how we

17:08

jews meet darkness when it confronts us

17:13

we manifest eternal hope

17:16

and the faith that our values may be

17:19

aligned

17:20

with our actions hope

17:23

and faith has sustained our people

17:26

through

17:26

3 800 years of wandering

17:30

expulsion and eventual return

17:35

like a baton passed through the

17:37

generations it was hope and faith

17:39

that emboldened abraham to first follow

17:42

god's call and leave behind

17:44

everything he knew

17:48

it was hope and faith that flickered to

17:50

moses

17:51

from the burning bush igniting our

17:54

exodus from egypt

17:57

hope and faith inspired the beginning of

18:00

rabbinic judaism

18:01

2600 years ago after the destruction of

18:05

the first temple

18:07

and the babylonian exile

18:10

hope and faith transformed our judaism

18:13

into a portable religion two thousand

18:16

years ago

18:17

when the romans torched the second

18:19

temple

18:20

and we entered galoot the exile of two

18:24

thousand years

18:27

and during those 2000 years through

18:29

countless

18:30

inquisitions and pogroms

18:35

through the horrors of the shoah the

18:37

holocaust

18:39

our ancestors held fast to hope

18:43

and faith and it nourished them

18:49

there is no greater more tangible

18:52

manifestation of hope and faith in

18:54

jewish history

18:56

than our modern state of israel

18:59

it's no surprise that israel's national

19:02

anthem

19:03

is named hatikva the hope

19:07

what other word captures the fulfillment

19:11

of the 2 000 year old yearning

19:14

to return to our ancient homeland

19:19

it was hope and faith that kept our

19:22

jewish dream alive through the millennia

19:24

of exile and persecution

19:29

david ben-gurion he once said in

19:33

israel in order to be a realist

19:36

you must believe in miracles

19:41

for all the blood sweat and tears that

19:45

were poured into the founding of the

19:46

state of israel the sheer

19:48

persistence of hope and faith

19:52

of tikvah is as much a miracle

19:56

as the 1948 miracle itself

20:01

the hebrew word tikvah has its roots

20:06

in the book of joshua the israelites

20:09

were finally preparing to conquer

20:12

and re-enter our promised land the land

20:14

of israel

20:15

joshua sent spies into jericho

20:20

and the king hears how they're in town

20:23

and he sets

20:24

out to kill them so the spies take

20:28

refuge in the home of rehab

20:32

and in exchange for rehab's protection

20:35

they promise

20:36

she and her household will be spared

20:39

when the israelites capture the city

20:44

but as a sign of rahab's faith

20:48

she attaches to her window

20:51

what the bible calls a scarlet

20:54

tikvah from the root

20:58

caf meaning thread or

21:01

cord i want you to picture that

21:05

ancient red string dangling

21:09

in the breeze what a striking

21:14

image because sometimes

21:17

in life life's most challenging moments

21:21

all we have to hold onto is a

21:24

thin thread of hope

21:29

and sometimes that's all we need to get

21:32

through

21:32

another day

21:36

i've shared before a story and some of

21:39

you may recall it but it's very powerful

21:41

it's the story of rabbi hugo grin

21:45

and he tells about his life as a boy in

21:48

auschwitz

21:50

one winter evening in the barrack hugo's

21:53

father

21:53

called him into a quiet corner to remind

21:56

him

21:56

it was hanukkah and the youngster

22:00

watched an amazement as his father

22:02

carefully plucked a few threads from his

22:05

prison uniform for a wick

22:08

and then he lit the threads in the days

22:11

now melted butter ration and the boy

22:15

became angry

22:17

how could his father waste this precious

22:19

food for a makeshift menorah

22:23

his father understood

22:26

but put his hand on his son's shoulder

22:29

and he said my dear son

22:32

you and i have seen how it's possible to

22:35

live for a very long time

22:38

without food but hugo

22:42

a person cannot live even for a day

22:47

without hope and faith

22:52

from rahab's red string

22:55

to a hanukkah candle wick made from the

22:58

threads of an auschwitz uniform

23:00

hope and faith are part of our jewish

23:04

dna rabbi

23:08

jonathan sachs the former chief rabbi of

23:10

england he teaches us to be

23:11

a jew is to be an agent of

23:15

hope and a world serially

23:18

threatened by despair

23:22

every ritual every

23:26

mitzvah every syllable of the jewish

23:29

story

23:30

every element of jewish law is a protest

23:33

against escapism

23:35

against resignation against the blind

23:38

acceptance of fate

23:44

it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the

23:47

world's brokenness

23:50

it's easy to throw up our hands and

23:52

resign ourselves to the present reality

23:56

but amidst all the despair

23:59

we must reach for our threads of hope

24:02

and cling to our faith

24:08

5781 years of history

24:11

remind us to look forward to this

24:14

new year with hope and faith

24:20

so in 57 81 i say out with the old in

24:23

with the new

24:25

let's cast aside the darkness

24:28

let's move to a new future where we

24:30

manifest hope in

24:32

thought in words and in action

24:37

shana tovah wishing

24:40

us all a gear of good health

24:44

of happiness of peace

24:47

a year of sweetness of

24:50

hope of faith

24:54

the blessings for our future and let us

24:57

say

24:58

amen we're going