



Rosh Hashanah, Day Two
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Tough Times Don't Last. Tough People Do.
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I want to talk to you this morning about a certain wide receiver for the New England Patriots. His name is Julian Edelman. There is a Showtime documentary entitled “100%: Julian Edelman.” As I watched it, I thought to myself this is 100% High Holiday material.

The documentary tells the exceedingly improbable story of the fall and rise that Julian Edelman experienced last year. He was contending, at the same time, with two different problems, double trouble, one that happened *to him*, the other that *he brought on himself*.

He was contending with an ACL injury, a tear in one of the major ligaments in his knee. Since he is a receiver whose game hinges on his being both fast and quick, on being able to cut and pivot on a dime, the ACL injury threatened his career. The ACL injury happened to him.

But while he was rehabbing from the surgery, the NFL suspended him for four games for violating its drug policies. During the four-game suspension, he was in exile. He could not practice at the Patriots’ facility, could not be with his teammates or trainers. Julian Edelman is exceptionally close to his father Frank who is not only his father but also a coach, confidante, cheer leader and best friend. They spoke every day. But when the news came out that Julian was suspended for violating the league’s drug policy, his father did not speak to him for 81 days.

The injury happened to him. The suspension he brought on himself.

We know how it all ends. Julian Edelman returns from his injury, he rehabs fully, he returns from his suspension, he catches 10 passes in the Super Bowl and is named Most Valuable Player. How does he do it?

This question matters because, while none of us is a pro football player, many of us have

been derailed by some combination of bad things happening to us, and our own bad decisions.

Bad things happen to us. Some reversal of health, wealth, work, or relationship happens to us that we did not deserve. There we were, sailing happily along, and bam! Something happens to us. Life is not the same.

And sometimes we make bad decisions. I wish I could rewind and go back and do it again. I made a bad decision. Life is not the same.

When these two things happen at the same time--something bad happens to us, and we make a bad decision--we sometimes feel the way Julian Edelman is portrayed as feeling: in exile from the life you used to live and love. Not doing what you used to do. Not being who you used to be. Not enjoying the peace of mind that you used to enjoy.

How did Julian Edelman emerge from all that to regain his life, and what can we learn from him? His father Frank wore a t-shirt that had the answer. The t-shirt said: *Tough times don't last. Tough people do.*

Tough times don't last. Tough people do. I want to invite you to think about three qualities that tough people embody. These three qualities are captured by an acronym, **REP: Resilience. Empower Other People. Panoramic Perspective.**

Now Julian Edelman is an elite professional athlete, a Super Bowl MVP. It is not surprising that when the going gets tough, he can summon resilience, empowering others, and panoramic perspective. But you do not need to be a professional athlete to embody these qualities. I want to share with you stories of three women from Temple Emanuel, ordinary, extraordinary people, respectively in their 80s, 90s, and 100s, who embody these same qualities.

Resilience. Tough people are resilient. Julian Edelman has major surgery and then puts in the grueling work needed to get back. You see him lunging, squatting, lifting, running, sweating, grunting and groaning. You see the face of a person *who will not be denied.*

This past year one of our beloved members, Dottie Adelman, died at 104. I remember being at her 100th birthday party. She introduced me to her doctor who told me: My job is to get them from their 80s to their 90th birthday. Once they are in their 90s, they are kind of on their own. Dorothy made it to 104. How?

Dorothy was both an artist and a teacher of an art form that was highly technical called papier tole. It requires nimble fingers and mental acuity. It is not easy being in your hundreds. People over 100 have health things they are working though. Yet none of that stopped Dorothy from doing her art work. She would get up in the morning, get herself ready for another day, and with nimble fingers and mental acuity, get to work, making art. And none of that stopped her from teaching art. She taught a class—that is to say her students came to Lasalle for their 104 year old teacher's lesson—*two days before she died. She would not be denied.* Tough people are people who, whatever they are dealing with, *will not be denied.*

When a tough time befalls us, can we summon the intensity of a person *who will not be denied.*

The second quality of tough people is that they **empower other people**. Julian Edelman was driven to rehab his way to recovery because he felt an obligation to be there for his teammates, his coaches, his trainers, his fans, all the people who believed in him.

What is the point of your life? If the only point of your life is your life, that is not a very inspiring life. But if the point of your life is to empower somebody else, or to advance a worthy cause, that is a life that inspires love in others, and give you strength and purpose.

When tough times befall us, can we empower other people or other causes? There is a woman who joined our community when her husband was in his last days. They had a long and loving marriage, a beautiful love affair. When he passed, the loneliness of widowhood, closing

the door to be all alone at the end of the day, seemed impossibly painful. What to do? How to get through the day?

She started coming to our daily minyan, which is something she had never done before. But an amazing thing happened to her at daily minyan. While dealing with her own loss, she started meeting other people who were dealing with their losses. She started comforting them, and that gave her comfort. She started listening to their stories, and that gave her strength. In empowering others, we become stronger.

R is for resilience.

E is for empower other people or worthy causes you believe in because the point of our life is not our life.

And the P is for panoramic perspective. When we find ourselves in the middle of a tough season, the danger is that all can seem lost. The sky is falling. How do we get out?

Rabbi Efram Goldberg talks about the importance of **having a panoramic perspective**. When you are at the Grand Canyon, or some other massive and large site that cannot be taken in by a single photo, our smart phones have the capacity to take the panoramic shot. Tough people have *a panoramic perspective*. We know what is painful in our life. We don't deny it. But we also know what is beautiful and joyful in our life. We want to feel it, to own it, to not get derailed by the pain.

Julian Edelman's injury, suspension and exile were all real. But what was also real was his love for the game, his coaches and therapists who nurtured him back to health, his teammates who were rooting for him.

There is a woman who came to Temple Emanuel from New York several years ago to be closer to her children. She was a widow in her mid- 80s. She had an incomparable spirit and strength. This woman chose every winter to go to Israel to volunteer teaching English to Israeli

school children. She's mid to late 80s. She would fly to Israel on her own, take cabs and navigate her way in Israel on her own, live on her own, shop on her own, volunteer her time.

Three years ago, while in a shuk in Tel Aviv, a crowded market, she trips, falls, and breaks her arm. She is air lifted back to Boston, has surgery, and spends months rehabbing.

She could have packed it in. She could have said why me. She could have said no more. But she summoned a panoramic perspective. I love going to Israel. This was a tough break. Breaking my arm was no fun. Flying home, surgery, rehab, no fun. But I love Israel. I love teaching English to Israeli school children. I love the fact that I can still go to Israel by myself and contribute. There is a greater good here, and nothing is going to keep me from it.

For the last two years, she went back to Israel, flying on her own, navigating cabs on her own, living on her own, volunteering her time, teaching children English.

P is for panoramic perspective. *Don't let your problems become your story. Let your story be that you didn't let your problems become your story.*

Tough times don't last. Tough people do.

May we do what tough people do. May we do what 80, 90 and 100 plus-year old women at Temple Emanuel do. May we embody REP. Resilience. Empower other people or causes. Panoramic perspective. When we do that, the tough times will pass, and we will still be here, ready to enjoy the better days that surely lie ahead. *Shana Tova.*