



**Rosh Hashanah 2011**

**“ON THE OCCASION OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SEPTEMBER 11”**

**Reflections**  
**by Kenneth Lewis**

Good morning and thank you, Rabbi Peter, for the invitation to speak to our Congregation. I am greatly honored. It has been a very fast 5 years since I spoke to you about my experiences on 9/11. I was taller and had darker hair the last time I spoke (I know I should be happy to have hair). Five years ago, my son, Sam, was entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade and in the midst of preparing for his Bar Mitzvah. Now he is a senior applying to university and thinking of becoming an architect like his dad. Our lives have moved on. So has my work.

Today is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my first day at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill if you don't know SOM is a larger international architecture, engineering firm with offices around the world. As a Director at SOM I have many responsibilities beyond World Trade Center Tower One. At this very moment I manage the design of two buildings under construction in mid-town: one in the diamond district, the other at 54<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. I also have responsibility for three other projects--- one in the Hudson Yards area, and two near Times Square, all of which could start construction in the next year if everything goes well.

The team I lead is at this very moment working furiously on a competition for a new headquarters project in Newark, a project that could start construction next September. Given the state of our economy this is all very good.

I have another anniversary coming up: on October 16th I will have worked as an architect for ten years on the World Trade Center. Ten years. Not in a drafting room, not pouring concrete, not bending rebar but slugging away in the front row.

As such I am often honored to speak about the World Trade Center. In the last month I have met with 5 professional groups, spoken to about 150 students, given lectures to 6 foreign research groups, led 6 tours and, if everything lines up, I will be presenting a journal paper I co-wrote on Tower One to an international symposium on tall buildings in Korea in October. In 3 weeks I travel to Brazil to present the project to an international real estate council.

When I lecture I talk about the details, the design processes, the “math” of a super tall tower, its progress. I speak about very abstract ideas like the vortices of wind. I talk about water and smoke and blast and fire. I describe escape and protection. I talk about obelisks and meaning, about memory and, for lack of a better word, I talk about sustainability.

I talk about the complexity of building over and adjacent to two active railroads. I speak about the massiveness of the effort. I list numbers and statistics: like 3,200 workers, 45,000 tons of steel, 64000 cubic yards of concrete, 2.4m square feet of glass, and enough wire in the building to go around the world twice..

I try to help people imagine the future: imagine if you will piling the south tower of Time Warner Center on top of the north tower and then capping that with a 450 foot tall geodesic light house crowned by a beacon flashing dash dot...dash dot...dash dot...( n for New York) all of it very abstract and frankly kind of cool...and, I admit, a great source of pride.

What I do not talk about are other abstractions, abstractions in my heart and mind...what I think about working on the World Trade Center, what I feel about working in Lower Manhattan, what 9/11 meant to me, what I experience when I walk the site, the sixteen acres that is ground zero and how it has all affected me personally. I confess that I don't inspect my own feelings that readily, nor do I talk about them easily, but fortunately I can see through the prism of my colleagues, my friends and my family that this all has had a profound effect and the ripples continue today.

When I see a plane racing up the Hudson, do I catch my breath? Sometimes...when I see the bare foundations below the memorial fountains do I see the ghosts of the towers? ... I do...when I meet with Lee Ieppe the founder, heart and soul of the tribute center and the docents who give the tours do I get choked up? Yes. When I see a beautiful, crystal clear day, do I think of that day?...yes I do...but what I do after each and every one of these rare moments is I believe most important...I think that this is not that day... I think about the list...the list of things that needs to get done, the never ending, uncompromising, un-ending slash infinite list...

What I also do now that I didn't do before is mentor more than I ever thought possible. I teach part time at parsons school of constructed environments a studio. I try, when I can, to sit on student juries. I have become a member of the New York Building Congress and Urban Green, New York's green building organization. I am a principal in a building science research collaborative with RPI. I give lectures about leadership at a Fortune 100 company. I have done service projects in New Orleans 9<sup>th</sup> ward.

I have travelled great distances to see the world's tallest building, the most beautiful temples in Asia, and the rolling hills of the golden triangle.

I have also become my mother's medical proxy. I have lent support to my father who has suffered huge financial setbacks. I have spent as many Sundays in the fall as possible driving to and from Philadelphia with my son to see the Philadelphia eagles. (last weekend was a very painful drive home).

I am a more engaged person.

We've now ended the first decade of the new millennium and by the close of the second decade the World Trade Center will be completed and fully occupied, day and night.

It is my expectation that by the middle of this century there will be an open and welcoming park in Lower Manhattan where workers and tourists will have lunch, play with their children and wander and have their breath taken away by the Memorial's 30 foot falls and shed tears over names etched in the 9/11 National Memorial. Much like the Boston Common, the parade ground in Brooklyn, Grand Army Plaza, and many memorial parks across the country, it will be another park in a city newly full of parks, green, fresh and full of people.

And perhaps, just perhaps there won't be anything left to say about Tower One ....except maybe to my grandchildren..