

My Mother and Helen Keller

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

In this month of *Elul* when we prepare for *Rosh Hashana* we are reminded that our highest destiny is to face life's pains and prevail, over and over again. Stamina, not giftedness, is the most precious attribute of character. Resilience is the strain of spiritual DNA that distinguishes those who build lives of purpose and beauty.

Helen Keller, deaf and blind, who managed to teach and write and educate a generation, told us: "The world is full of suffering but also full of the overcoming of it." All around us each day are people struggling with disease, infirmity, loneliness, hunger, and the possible loss of hope. Yet many of those same people are paragons of goodness, of giving, and of love. It does not erase the obstacles in life, but each day they arise anew knowing that the world requires 'the overcoming of it.'

Visiting my mother recently in Philadelphia I saw a woman who for over 25 years following a cerebral hemorrhage, has been aphasic, almost completely unable to speak, confined to a wheelchair, who four years ago lost her husband. Yet her moments of understandable despair give way to laughter and declarations of love. Battlefield courage is admirable; but sometimes no less praiseworthy is the bravery of those who overcome, every day.