For Effie And Nate

In a few weeks we will hear
The first word of the first chapter of the first book of the five

The first word is *beresheit* — "in the beginning"
Beginning — the word signals excitement and adventure
Promise and hope

Effie and Nate,
Now is your genesis
A new life / A new beginning / A new oath / A new year
A new discovery of a new self.

Where is the self to be found?
Not on a desert island or uninhabited mountain top
Not in soliloquy — But in shared duality
Not in monologue — But in covenantal dialogue

"I" is found in "thou"
Without "thou," no "I"
Without "I" … only "me"

Me — Insulated, isolated, self–absorbed
Blind to stars, deaf to song
With "thou," an "I" is born
In your laughter, my heart is lifted up
In your tears, my pain
In your exultation, my triumph
In your stumbling I stand beside you
Together we balance each other
Together, we will not fall

Strong as the rock are we
Yet fragile as the glass we soon will break

Powerful are we, yet vulnerable to a word
Sensitive to gesture, inflection, tone

Speak softly now
Gently with a kindness of tongue
Kindly, with deep wisdom of empathy

Softly, for the "thou" is no vessel,
An ear into which I shout my ambitions and frustrations
"Thou," not a vessel, but a feeling heart
Pulsating to the rhythm of your heart

Our sages counsel,
If your bride is shorter than you,
Bend down and listen to her.
If your groom is taller than you,
Place his head upon your shoulder
And let your eyes meet in loving confirmation

You both stand surrounded with the blessings of God,
        family and friends
May *ahavah* — love — keep you from *afelah* — darkness
And may you live your lives under a cloudless love
Beruchah elohuth ha-meviah simcha v'sasson v'shalom
May Godliness that dwells between you and us bring
        joy, mirth, exultation and peace

> *With love,*
> *Harold M. Schulweis*

▪ **Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis**