

**“Peace Begins Here” – Kol Nidre/Yom Kippur Evening 5770
September 27, 2009-Rabbi Lawrence P. Karol**

Tzedek V'Shalom (L. Karol - Based on Psalm 85, Verses 11-14)

CHORUS (2x at beginning and end):

**Chesed ve-emet nifgashu -tzedek v'shalom nashaku
Emet mei-eretz titz-mach v'tzedek mi-shama-yim nishkaf**

**Gam adonai yitayn hatov v'artzeinu ti-tayn y'vulah
Tzedek l'fanav y'halaych y'seim l'derech pa-amav. CHORUS**

**Take me home again to the truths I believe in
Take me home again to the peace I once knew**

Let mercy and justice come together as I walk along their way – CHORUS

(TRANSLATION: Faithfulness/mercy and truth shall meet/coincide; justice and well-being/peace will kiss. Truth will spring up from the earth and justice will look down from heaven. The Eternal will bestow goodness and the land will yield its produce. Justice will go forth before the Eternal, making a path for the soles of the divine feet/for God's steps- OR as the Eternal One sets out on the way).

“Lovingkindness and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss.” Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin quoted this passage from the book of Psalms in his address to the Knesset on November 20, 1977, as he spoke to his parliament and in front of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, whose historic visit to Jerusalem led to the signing of the first peace treaty between the State of Israel and an Arab nation. With Israeli and Palestinian leaders making little progress in restarting peace talks in recent months, I find myself rereading declarations of positive visions in the speeches of Menachem Begin, Golda Meir, David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Rabin and other Israeli Prime Ministers of the past. The many years of rocket attacks by Hamas from Gaza against Israeli towns and the Israeli response against Hamas last December and January made this year a difficult one for anyone who hopes for peace.

Peace is not only about creating treaties and agreements between nations now in bitter conflict. It is something much more, and that is what I wanted to explore when I asked congregants and my friends on facebook to respond to this question: “How do you create peace in yourself and how can we make peace in the community and the world - or, more specifically...where does peace begin?”

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Let’s listen to some of the responses I received that will lead into a strong statement about peace from Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen and the evaluation of the possibilities for Middle East peace by Israeli scientist Haim Harari in his book, **A VIEW FROM THE EYE OF THE STORM**. Our views about peace in our own lives have something to teach frustrated negotiators throughout the world whose ultimate goals seem to remain distant and out of reach. Here is our verbal peace collage, comprised of statements from friends and congregants:

- We need peace in our hearts to create peace in the world, but we also need peace in the world to create peace in our hearts. I think this is what makes things so difficult in many corners of the world. It is so easy to start out with peaceful ideals but be embittered by what goes on around us. We can bring peace to ourselves by doing good for others as well as by having it done for us.
- Albert Einstein once said, "Peace cannot be achieved through violence. It can only be attained through understanding." This is one of my favorite quotes. In my experience, violence takes many forms (as does peace), the most dangerous combination is ignorance and violence or worse yet, willingness to be ignorant, to keep your eyes, ears and mouth closed and accept violence as a justified answer to peace, and not question it. Peace is understanding and willingness to forgive, to love and to be open not just to others, but to yourself. I have observed people all my life. The human spirit has a great capacity for peace. People don't give themselves enough credit for the power they can have over peace, for the wonderful and positive things inside and outside of them, for the ability to accept themselves fully.... People are so vulnerable and susceptible to their own and

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others’ perceptions, they fall into roles, expectations and “boxes.” When they realize that they are more than these limitations, it is amazing to see how peace and courage begins to sparkle in their eyes and how they can begin to affect others. Peace is someone believing in you and willing to understand you, as well as turning an inward eye, believing and understanding yourself, and then paying it forward to others....To create peace is to be willing to be courageous enough to be the source and example of peace, even when it is most difficult to do so. Finally to make peace in the community is to be humble, helpful but aware and informed...responsible to be able to attain peace through understanding of all people.

- **One creates peace (in part) by refraining from lashing out in anger. It helps to wait until one has calmed down to discuss difficulties. Of course, this is just preventing discord rather than creating shleima/completeness, but it's gotta help."**
- **"Bob Marley said no peace until there's justice...."**
- **"Peace is the result of love. Without love, peace is impossible."**
- **I think peace comes when there is an absence of fear and misunderstanding. Peace must have something to do with accepting that the people around you are making decisions, some which may lead to mistakes, some minute, some terrible, but they are not trying to hurt you, they don't mean to hurt you any more than you mean to hurt them (them meaning people, strangers or friends and family) So...if we give them that benefit of the doubt and allow them our compassion, if not our understanding, and refuse to let our fear, our own instinct for self preservation, create a backlash that perpetuates a destructive circle of hatred and retribution, maybe we can do some good. Peace begins with little steps of acceptance, of empathy, even if it starts with**

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believing the person who just cut you off on the road didn't intend it as a personal affront, thinking of a good reason why they must be in such a rush...

- "It all starts with inner peace, then wanting that peace to be felt by those around us. It's easy to stop fighting with others when we decide to stop fighting with ourselves. We stop inner turmoil by being kind, honest and not compromising our morality. When you feel that peace, it is easy to want that for everyone else."
- If you are at peace, then you can spread peace. To create peace within requires a unique balance of love, God, family, friends, gratitude, and joy.
- "I think it all starts with acceptance. We need to accept and love ourselves for who we are, and not try to meet other people's expectations or put ourselves down because we're not perfect. We need to strive to be the best we can be. If we could all do that, perhaps we could be more accepting of others and not try to change them and the world might be a more peaceful place. That includes accepting each other's differences. I also like the word harmony. Think of what we do when we sing harmony with one another. We work together for a common goal; making beautiful music together.
- My thoughts about peace in my life, in my home and within my family is for me to personally think about what is truly important in my life: health, education, being able to afford and provide true necessities. Then... Frequent discussions with my wife and children about these things to establish family and personal values. Peace comes from setting examples within the home...showing restraint when it comes to relatively minor things like "clean your room," "hang up your stuff." Peace comes from discussing what the world IS like and what it COULD be like- such as, living by the

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Golden Rule and encouraging others, including by example, to do likewise.

We discuss that in some parts of the world there is, seemingly, NO HOPE for peace in the short-term but that, perhaps, with education and a better standard of living, there MIGHT BE HOPE for peace in the long-term. There are some people, however, who will do anything and everything possible to disrupt peace anywhere and anytime...short-term or long-term; and these people have to be reckoned with.

- Jewish Philosopher Hermann Cohen once wrote of how letting go of hatred is a prerequisite for peace. He said, “I can remove hatred from the human heart only insofar as I do not know any enemy at all; the information that a person is my enemy, that he or she hates me, must be as incomprehensible to me as that I myself could hate a person, and therefore it must drop out of my consciousness. With this overcoming of hatred, the way opens up for peace of soul. As long as hatred threatens me, I cannot hope for peace or for genuine contentment. For my own peace, I need the confidence that hatred among peoples will be destroyed from the consciousness of humankind.**
- Consider all that you have heard about peace in the previous comments that cover all levels of life as you listen to this commentary on Middle East peace from Haim Harari in his book, *A View from the Eye of the Storm*: “One day there will be peace in the Middle East. No one knows when this day will come, or just what will happen before it arrives. But most thinking people know, more or less, what form it will have. It may happen in a few years or a few decades. It may be preceded by one or more future wars, or simply by continued terror and agitation. But peace will almost certainly come. There are certain immutable facts in the Middle east. Peace will arrive**

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only if the Palestinians accept the existence of Israel. Peace can materialize only if the Palestinians have their own state-next to Israel, not instead of it. The densely Jewish areas will be part of Israel; the densely Palestinian areas will be part of the Palestinian state. Israel will have an Arab minority. Many Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza will have to be abandoned. Most of Jerusalem will remain in Israel, and it will continue to be the capital city. Some heavily populated Arab neighborhoods of the greater Jerusalem area will be in the Palestinian state and may form its capital city. A carefully planned demilitarization strategy must be developed; it will take a substantial number of years and can be lifted only by mutual consent. Descendants of Palestinian refugees will be settled in Arab countries, many of them in the Palestinian state. All Arab countries bordering with Israel will have peace agreements with it, and no unresolved territorial issues will remain....All of these conclusions are inevitable- not because everybody accepts them today, but because all sides must accept them before peace can be achieved. If any one of them fails to materialize, peace in the region will remain elusive.”

- Harari’s statement may give us a glimmer of hope as we hear some aspects of his vision now being proposed by Palestinians and Israeli leaders. The following anonymous quote reminds us that, even where there seems to be no peace right now, it still may be a silent, strong presence. This thought offers us wisdom and hope: “Peace – it does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.”

After gathering all of these reflections on peace, I took a few moments to write down my own thoughts, which I have printed for you on the handout

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tonight. We will read responsively this conclusion to our journey towards the place where peace begins:

We can find peace when we accept who we are and where we are at any given moment.

We can find peace when we accept other people as they are and where they are at any given moment.

We can find peace when we acknowledge that some conflicts may not be resolved and some hurts may not be healed.

We can find peace when we give another person the gift of forgiveness and reconciliation, even if that person does not seek it.

We can find peace when we realize that we have given the best of ourselves in a difficult situation, having taken the high road, the gracious approach.

We can find peace when we understand that not every attempt to positively engage with other people will be accepted, even when that approach comes from the depth of our hearts.

We can find peace when, in the midst of even bitter conflict, respect, fellowship, and remembering our common humanity persists and prevails.

We can find peace when we see ourselves as part of a great and wide universe and feel that connection running through our body and soul.

We can find peace in a quiet moment of prayer or meditation, when our entire being is focused on the oneness of God, the wholeness we can create within ourselves, and the unity within all creation.

We can find peace when we take time to consider all of the gifts we have been given and be thankful.

We can find peace when we forgive ourselves and others for errors in behavior and judgment, mistakes that are the consequence of being human.

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We can find peace when atonement washes us clean, creating in us a new heart and a soul that will continue to strive for goodness, kindness and decency.

And so we ask God to cause us to lie down each night in peace and to awaken each morning to new life and strength. May God continue to spread a shelter of peace of us, over Jerusalem and over the entire world – and let us say Amen.