

**YOM KIPPUR 5780 SERMON
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BY LORNE GOULD**

Shanah Tova. I have a few words to say about peace, and I'd like to start by quoting three well-known warriors:

Dwight D. Eisenhower: "People...are going to do more to promote peace than...governments...People want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it."

William Gladstone: "We look forward to the time when the Power of Love will replace the Love of Power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace."

Napoleon Bonaparte: "In the long run the sword is always beaten by the spirit."

These men, who were accomplished soldiers, generals, presidents and prime ministers, had all played a part in confronting their enemies and waging war. And yet, they all eventually expressed views that support my vision of a world culture that embraces peace and non-violence. That may seem strange at first, but it illustrates the reality that a desire for peace and goodwill towards our fellow humans is a fundamental part of our basic nature.

So, if peace is such a natural part of our identity, why do we humans make war against one another? Why do we experience hatred; why do we fight each other? I have often asked myself these questions, and I'm not sure I have an absolute answer for them, but I do have some ideas to offer.

World Peace is defined by Wikipedia as "the concept of an ideal state of happiness, freedom and peace within and among all people and nations on Planet Earth"

So far, this century, there seems to have been an abundance of anger and hatred in many places around the globe. Unfortunately, this is not something new; we have seen war, violence and brutality in our human community throughout history, since biblical times. In the 20th century, much of this violence manifested itself in conflict between nations, and by the actions of national governments, while in the 21st century, there seems to have also been a surge in the mass killing of strangers by what I can only assume are disturbed individuals. But I think it all comes down to the same root: the demons of anger and hatred in our own soul sometimes overpower the even more fundamental forces of love and respect for others in our global community.

It may seem incomprehensible to us how this can happen, but I think there is a way to understand such behavior by looking within our own hearts to search for the root cause of aggression towards others.

In order to hate someone or something, you have to view the object of your hatred as separate and unconnected with yourself. But, in reality, we are ultimately all deeply connected with each other. We all come from the same divine source; we all share the same strengths and weaknesses, the same aspirations and fears. As human beings, we are not only part of the global human community, we also share this planet with a myriad of animals and plants, all of which are part of a giant tapestry made out of DNA. Homo sapiens share 60% of their DNA with bananas. The idea that our individual, separate identity is an illusion, and in reality we are all woven into the vast tapestry of existence, is a central theme of Kabala, which believes that “all things are linked to God ... making all levels in creation part of one great, gradually descending chain of being.” It is also the Tantric worldview, as practiced in Hinduism and Buddhism. Tantra literally means loom, or weave, and the Tantric perspective sees all life as fundamentally connected and interwoven.

But once the human ego takes charge, the connectedness of all life becomes obscured by the sense that we are all separate beings,

profoundly disconnected from everything around us. And in this deeply alienated state, it becomes possible to lose the experience of self-love; we can mistrust the feeling of being loved by others. In order to deeply love others, we must also deeply love ourselves. In the words of Lao Tzu, 'Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.'

Once we lose the blissful state of being in love with ourselves and with life itself, we can begin to feel fear and vulnerability, leading us to seek out power over others in order to suppress that extreme feeling of being weak and alone. And that opens the door to hatred; we can only hate what we don't embrace with love.

Some people believe that anger and hatred come from a source of pure evil; that some malevolent being, like Satan, is at the root of violent behavior. Personally, I don't believe in this hypothesis. There is an ancient Hindu Mantra that translates as "There is no evil in the life of one who holds the sun in their heart." (Aditya Hridayam Punyam Sarv Shatru Bena Shanam) The sun does not shine on everyone because they are deserving; it doesn't make any bargains with people, or ask them if they have earned the blessing of its warmth and energy. It shines on everyone, regardless of their worthiness or goodness. This is the way we must all be in our own lives, holding the divine light of love in our spiritual hearts and sharing that love with the whole world. As more and

more people live their lives in the brilliance of love and compassion, the earth will become more and more full of peace and joy, eventually overpowering all of the darkness and anger that sometimes fills our world.

So my message is for us to live our lives in an unrestrained state of love with everyone and everything around us. Use our talents and our relationships to nurture thoughts of love and peace in the hearts and minds of others. We can do this in many ways; by praying, singing, dancing, making music, creating works of art, or simply by experiencing and

expressing our love of life and of everyone we share this planet with, as much as we are capable of.

In the words of the mystical Persian poet Hafiz, (Quote) Everyone you see, say to them, "Love me." Of course you do not do this out loud, otherwise someone would call the cops." (End Quote)

Some very talented people like John Lennon, have been able to create messages of love and peace that stir these sweet sensations within the hearts and minds of billions of people. Most of us never get the opportunity to express ourselves in a way that has such a vast effect. But each time we share the flame of love with one other person, we are also contributing our flame to the bonfire of global love that will, sooner rather than later, immolate the darkness of hatred everywhere on planet earth.

Peace is our inevitable destiny, because it is such an expression of our true nature as human beings. In the words of the 60s rock band The Youngbloods, "Come on people now, Smile on your brother. Everybody get together; Try to love one another right now"

And in the words of John Lennon, it is not too late to "give peace a chance"