

A Sermon for Peace

Shalom.

The Hebrew word *shalom* is often translated simply as "peace," but it means so much more. It speaks of wholeness, completeness, healing, justice, and harmony. True peace is not merely the absence of conflict, it is the presence of compassion, dignity, and hope.

Our tradition teaches, "Seek peace and pursue it." Peace is not something we wait for, it is something we actively chase. We are called to build bridges where others build walls, to listen where others shout, and to recognize the divine image in every human being.

The Torah reminds us that every person is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. This truth extends beyond nationality, religion, language, or background. Every life possesses infinite value. Every child deserves safety. Every family deserves the chance to live without fear.

The rabbis taught saving one life is as if one has saved an entire world. If one life contains an entire world, then every act of kindness, every gesture of reconciliation, every word spoken with humility has the power to change more than we can see.

Peace does not require us to ignore injustice. Rather, Judaism insists that lasting peace must be rooted in righteousness. The prophet Isaiah envisioned a day when nations would "beat their swords into ploughshares" and learn war no more. This vision remains unfinished, and is entrusted to every generation to achieve it.

We cannot control every event in the world, but we can choose how we respond. We can reject hatred. We can refuse to dehumanize those with whom we disagree. We can pray, serve, comfort the grieving, welcome the stranger, and pursue justice with mercy.

May we become instruments of *shalom* in our homes, our communities, and among all peoples. May our words heal rather than wound. May our actions reflect God's love for all humanity.

Oseh shalom bimromav, Hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu, v'al kol Yisrael, v'al kol yoshvei tevel. V'imru: Amen.

May he who makes peace in his high places, send peace, tolerance and understanding to us, to Israel, and to all mankind, and let us say amen