

Meditation & Reflection
A Sermon by Mark Fenster
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Story of High School Band performance ~ “I Love You!” ->

I was at a high school dance, a great live rock and roll band playing tremendous vibe and they ended their show with the lead singer saying: “Thank you - you’ve been a great audience. We Love You!”

And I thought, You *love* me?? You don’t even *know* me!” I found it so very odd and didn’t understand why he would say that - must be phoney.

Fast forward to when I began my own experiences as a performer, realizing some wonderful things about “performance”: We tend to go to a concert or play or performance of any kind and we expect that we are passive recipients of what is about to be presented to us. But when, as the performer, I was up on stage, there to sing some songs, share my feelings, ... I noticed something Through my song I was giving a gift, an energy, a kind intention shrouded in a duvet of harmonies and poetry and the people sitting in front of me received and felt this gift, this energy... and something inside them was touched They felt something, and they sent the energy from *their* feelings right back to the stage! It grew into a huge wheel sending loving energy out and reeling it back in, then out again, louder, then in ... Before long, this cycle repeated so many times and with growing intensity each time, that by the end of the show, there was a HUGE, wonderful feeling of joy, peace, love! And, having just sung my last song of the evening, Feeling this wonderful energy, I heard myself say “Thank you! I love you all!”

The performer prepares and gives their audience a gift, sends it to them through the energies infused in the art they are sharing. The audience receives this energy, feels something, and then expresses that feeling through energy and sends that right to the performer. The performer’s energy amplifies and the gifts grow and intensify... the audience and performer create a show that is filled with Love. The gift first introduced by the performer quickly becomes a co-creation at the event itself through energetic contributions flowing to and from the stage! So the music you hear, the dance you see, the art you feel is something the artist AND you created together at that very venue! That’s just one of the reasons that live is always better than recorded. There’s nothing quite like co-creation to initiate a feeling and boisterous expression of “I Love You!”

So, with that, I will be guiding you in meditation with Patrick noodling along in Spirit ... and when the energy reaches a certain place, I will stop guiding and begin to play guitar and sing a loving blessing in song for you. Please just receive the gift, stay in meditation as you wish, with your eyes closed, no need to watch or applaud afterward, just listen, feel and receive....

~ ~ ~

Guided Musical Meditation ~

'Find a comfortable position, close your eyes, and invoke the Presence. Focus on your breath ... sharing Prana Golden globe of light above... embracing you fully golden globe of light below ... Light and Prana flowing in every direction We are light, love, beautiful in our perfect imperfections...

Live song to close meditation ~ "Priestly Blessing" {"Y'varech'cha"}

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Homily

'Healing Through Music'

So many people have wished for peace, love and harmony in our world and have felt a kindred sadness and confusion.

How beautiful then, that three faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—so seemingly disparate are so closely entwined in their original spiritual source.

The shared words of love, peace, brother and sisterhood, compassion, joy, and loving kindness that every religious belief on earth says is our essence....

Can we celebrate these? ... Together?

~ ~ ~

... This is what was written in your Bulletin as an intro to today's topic and when we met in my studio earlier this week, Louise, Patrick and I came up with another title:

"ONENESS OF LIFE AND LOVE"

'HEALING THROUGH MUSIC' 'ONENESS OF LIFE AND LOVE'

So, ... I watch the news and I wonder how do we do this....?
Let me start here, with a speech I wrote in 1999:

My name is Mark Fenster, my father is Saul Fenster of Baranoff, Poland, my mother is Diane Popowski Fenster of Luxembourg. As a son of two survivors of the holocaust, I feel a very strong inner desire and responsibility to help people understand the horrors and the bravery that took place then, to help in the healing of the many, many wounds that are still here today, and to do whatever I possibly can to help us all understand how we may perhaps prevent such atrocities from ever happening again to anyone anywhere.

In March of 1942 my father was taken from his small, peaceful village in Poland to a work camp. There, he worked very hard in hopes of just surviving. Later, he was moved to an SS camp called Puskow. The Commandant of that camp, a German Nazi SS officer, had gotten to know his inmates, and when he received his orders to send them off by train to Auschwitz, he travelled there also to try to persuade the officers at Auschwitz to save his workers. So, while my dad and the other prisoners stood idle just outside the gas chambers - awaiting their fate, their commandant was telling the officers that these people were well trained, good workers who could be helpful to the third reich. He pleaded with them. The result: over 150 lives were spared that day, including my dad's, and three days later they boarded trucks and moved on to their next destination. My father's last stop was in Buchenwald where he miraculously survived to the end of the war. And it was there that he was liberated by American soldiers, one of whom I actually had the honour of meeting. His name is Leon Bass, and he was speaking at a conference of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps. His lecture was entitled "Fighting Racism on Two Fronts". You see, Leon Bass, Doctor Leon Bass, is a black man from the southern United States, and while he was fighting the horrors of racism in Nazi Europe as an American comrade, he was not welcome in his own home town to sit on the same park benches, or share the same washrooms as his fellow white citizens.

~

My mother was only one year old when she was carried in her mother's arms as they were carted away to a Nazi holding camp in France. Her mother had heard of a brave woman who would smuggle children out of that camp and place some of them in the caring hands of French families' homes or a make-shift orphanage in the south of France; always with the hope of one day being able to reunite these families at the war's end. This brave woman, Madame Sabine Zlatin, took my mother to a safe home in Montpellier, France where she grew up with the Palares family and treated as one of their own - fed, clothed, and loved. Madame Zlatin and the Palares' family were instrumental in saving so many lives with their caring hearts and homes.

I stand before you now, with love in my heart and hope in my soul, because two magical people, Saul Fenster and Diane Popowski were able to survive the horrors, meet in Montréal Canada, fall in love and have a family of their own. My father survived at least partly because of a German Nazi who cared enough to want to help his workers, and because of an African American soldier who wanted to fight the wrongs of racism. My mother is here today because of the loving care she received from a Catholic family who risked their own lives to save others'. I want you to know that Madame Palares was the recipient of one of the highest honours given - the Righteous of the Nation Award, and Sabine Zlatin was successful in opening a museum in the very house where the Children of Izieu were hidden. She also received the Medal of Honour from Jerusalem.

Why do I tell you all this? It is because I want to show you how difficult and counter-productive it is to point the finger of blame anywhere. How can I blame the Gentiles, when it is because of the love of some Catholic individuals that my mother is here today? How can I point to the Blacks, or even ALL the Germans or Nazi's, when it is with some of their efforts that my dad was able to stand beside me at my Bar-Mitzvah, and was just here, standing beside us for my daughter's Bat-Mitzvah? I cannot, and I do not wish to. And when you think about it I hope that you will feel the same way. For to continue to lay blame is to continue the same hurtful legacy. We must stop this repetition of history NOW. We must stop it with love, understanding, and above all, TOLERANCE!

The simple ugly truth is that it is never one people or another that is to blame for anything. It is a certain person, or persons who are. And the most important thing we need to realize is that we are all, each and every one of us as humans, ALL capable of the same horror of the murderers, and the same love of our saviours and healers. Once we can recognize the truth of the span for ALL humanity, then and only then can we begin to heal our pains. Only then may we accept, tolerate, and maybe even learn to LOVE the differences in our peoples, just as we do with our flowers. I hope my mom and dad live to see that day. I know, as I'm sure you all do deep inside your souls, that this is the simple truth.

I wish you all peace, love, and tolerance for a world of happiness.

SHALOM SALAAM Pax Om Shanti

~ ~ ~

When originally asked to write this speech as the Keynote Speaker in 1999, I was offered suggestions of what to talk about, perhaps sharing how some countries' leaders are treating certain peoples unfairly, unjustly, even cruelly.

In a similar light, today I could also discuss some of the current conflicts in the **Ukraine**, or **Libya**, the **Middle East**, or the too many other wars, be they physical,

religious or racial, continuously raging on our planet. But I don't want to go on pointing fingers in an endless quest to lay blame in order to feel what has always become an empty, false sense of satisfaction.

I decided to tell my truth that day, my small story in a vast sea of millions (from every culture), and take a chance. I was shaking but I did it; I read this speech at the Holocaust Memorial Service {Yom Hashoah} in 1999. And, when I finished giving the speech, two actual Holocaust survivors came up to me, looked into my eyes, hugged me and said *"Thank you. Finally somebody said it. The Truth. Thank you"*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

ONENESS OF LIFE AND LOVE:

I was brought up Jewish - traditional more than religious. I went to synagogue twice a year and didn't understand a word...but was always told that "our" ways were best, We were the good ones, "Us & Them" ideologies abound.... and for a time I believed this - with a constant feeling of discomfort nearly always present.

As a musician and singer, several years ago I was invited to lead services as a Cantor - the Jewish Clergy member who leads services in song. I began to learn the Hebrew language and the meanings behind the sacred texts, and their vast number of interpretations And - no matter which way we sliced it, no matter what was our interpretation, no matter which sacred book I was reading what I've discovered can be described in a single word: ONE

The story of "Y'varech'cha" =

In ancient times, this blessing was (and still is) quite sacred, given by the High Priests of the time. The way the priest would share this blessing was to place his hands on top of the person's head (crown), with his fingers spread open in the Blessing Gesture (later known as Spock's Vulcan salute = *'live long & prosper'*) and share the Sacred energy with that person by allowing the Divine energy of Peace, Love and safety to flow through his hands to the recipient.

Several years ago I spent over a month at an Ashram in India and was introduced to a blessing called Deeksha. This Hindu practice recognizes us all as aspects of the Divine, and when placing our hands on the receivers' heads and invoking an intention, we shared blessings of Peace and Love with them in very much the same way as the High Priests did with their Priestly Blessing.

We are so very connected.

The story of "Ozi" =

{A description of the actual sacred text in the Tanakh , The Jewish Bible}

When the Israelites crossed the parted Red Sea, it is written that they were so elated in joy and gratitude for their having been saved that they began to sing “*Ozi v’zimrat Yah, vay’hi-li lishuah*” (Translation: “*My strength and my song to God shall be my salvation*”)

The ministering angels who were there to make sure that all went according to Divine plan, were so enraptured by this celebration that they wanted to sing along. God saw this and said to them: “Those people who are drowning are my children too ... and you want to celebrate!?” The angels did not sing that day.

We are all God’s children

Many many more stories and experiences have led me to find and offer Healing through Music, Meditation, Recordings, Performances all offering the Universal Truth that we are ALL “chosen”, Loved, Blessed, Beautiful Beings of the Divine!

The CANTORIA CD series is about how our lives are connected, blessed and safe ... and these musical offerings are given through music, sacred text, and the inspirations of lovingkindness that we all have flowing within. I am so very grateful for the path I’m on and to be able to share the sacred beauty of all of life. I want to thank you all for being here, and for sharing this precious time with me. I hope I’ve offered you some gifts to take home in your hearts. I still believe in Peace, and I always believe in Love!

The story of “One” =

Known globally as the pinnacle prayer in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the Sh’ma (or Shema) is commonly translated as: “*Hear o Israel, God is our God, God is One*”. But this interpretation may be incorrect. Let’s take it word by word...

Sh’ma = Hear, listen

Yisra-El = Two Hebrew words put together: Yisra = Wrestle with, Engage with; El = God. This seems to describe any people who engage with their faith... own Divine, no matter where, how, in which language,

So Yisra-El = **Wrestle with God**

Adonai = Generally used as a name of God, but this is plural, so it means **Gods**

Eloheynu = El means God; Oheinu is a possessive, and it could mean “ours” or it could also mean “us”. Not what we have but who we are.

Adonai = Gods

Echad = One.

Therefore, based on this translation, the Shema may also be interpreted as:

“Hear, All those who engage with God, Gods are Us, Gods are One”

All through time, the prophets from all faiths have always said that we have Godliness within us, that we are sacred beings, aspects of God, that we are all powerful, we are all connected, that we are all One.

Amen, and Thank You!

Mark Fenster

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One

“Sh’ma Yisra’El”

Sh’ma Yisra’El Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai echad

Sh’ma Yisra’El Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai echad

Hear, Souls of Love, All the Love that we are, all We are is One

Hear, Souls of God, All the Gods that We are, all We are is One

~ interlude ~

Sh’ma Yisra’El Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai echad

Hear, Souls of Love, All the Love that we are, all We are is One

Hear, Souls of God, All the Gods that We are, all We are is One

One

One

One

Melody and Blessing - Traditional
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“Y’varech’cha”
Universal Priestly Blessing

Y’varech’cha Adonai v’yish-m’recha

Ya-eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka

Yisa Adonai panav eilecha

v’yaseim l’cha Shalom

Shalom, Shalom, Shalom....

Let the Spirit Bless You & keep you safe

Let the Presence shine & be gracious over You

May the face of Love always look toward you

& give to you, Beloved, Peace

Peace, Peace, Peace....

Shalom, Shalom, Shalom....

Salaam, Salaam, Salaam....

Om Shanti, Om Shanti, Om Shanti....

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