

Weekly Teaching

November 18, 2016

These are edited/adapted excerpts from my Kol Nidre Sermon. If you would like to read the entire sermon, just let me know.

Shabbat Shalom,
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Emily Dickinson wrote:

*“Hope” is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –*

Hope; the *“thing with feathers;”* always linked with God.

And, its hope, as it flutters in and out of our lives, which gives us comfort, and helps us persevere when all else seems hopeless.

The Prophet Jeremiah proclaimed:

“God has plans for your welfare and not for harm. God will give you a future with hope, and then when you call upon God, and come and pray; God will hear you.”

As Jews, we train our body, mind and soul to assure a hopeful outlook.

We know that life is full of blessings and curses; life and death; but we always choose life; we choose hope.

Hope is to life, what oxygen is to the lungs, and the real problem for us is that people are not hopeful enough.

We all know that things are not perfect; there is war, poverty, hunger, sorrow, and violence.

Things are broken, and it is not as God would want it.

But, we Jews are told by God to be a *“Light unto the Nations.”*

We are called to help to bring God’s hope to the world and to help to repair that which is broken.

Not, because we are afraid, but because of the hope that stirs our souls when we think of what could be.

The English painter George Frederic Watts created a painting called "Hope."



In the background of the painting we can perceive the outlines of the continents and the oceans that surround them, and in the foreground is a woman seated at a harp.

Most of the harp strings are broken, dangling loosely from the top of the harp, or lying uselessly across her lap.

Yet, the harp still has one string still tautly strung, and Hope is plucking that one string and letting the tune without the words stir our souls.

We Jews have a choice; Hope is plucking that one string.

Will we focus on despair, or will we focus on hope?

Will we take every opportunity to deliver moments of joy, kindness and love?

It's this sharing of hope; this sharing of love; which is what Judaism is all about.

Tikkun Olam; Repairing the World; in every situation that arises.

Our challenge is to manifest our hope by praying for something that's better, and trusting that it will be better.

And, in confidence, go out and with concrete actions, manifest our confidence in the future.

We need to actively seek out the opportunities by which we can enjoy useful, joyful and purposeful lives.

It's been said that hope is like baking powder; it's what effectively helps us to rise up.

Let's look at the future with unlimited possibility, anticipation and expectancy; with the feeling of being on the edge of our seats, filled with a vision of the future in which all are welcomed at the bountiful table of existence.

Let's assume the best about people, and their innate abilities, goodness and potential.

God placed within each of us a small piece of Divinity and Wholeness.

This small piece goes by many different names: "Love," "Compassion," "Joy" and "Hope."

Let's better explore the areas where, love, compassion, joy and hope may be hiding in plain sight, and may each and every one of us bring hope out of the darkness and into the light.