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When the Rabbi and Julie asked me to substitute on Oseh Shalom for the Prayer Project, I said yes, without first looking at the prayer. And now that I've looked, I'm not sure that there's that much to say about it.

Oseh shalom bimromav,
hu yaaseh shalom aleinu,
v'al kol Yisrael,
v'imru Amen.

It's short . . . May the Maker of Peace in the high places or heights, make peace for us and for all of Israel, and let us say, amen. Another translation . . . may the one who makes peace in the heavens above help us to make peace with one another. We say it at the conclusion of many Jewish prayers and blessings, including the birkat ha'mazon (the blessing after meals), the Amida, and the Mourner's or Orphan's Kaddish. I wondered why it is recited repeatedly.

My musical memories of this particular prayer are limited. There's the classical version, and surprisingly it brings me no memory or connection. There's the Debbie Friedman version, and I have admit that this version gives me a bad headache. There are many more; I looked it up on YouTube and nothing hit an emotional chord.

So I'm left with the words, which on first read were difficult. For me that can be the beauty of singing or chanting in Hebrew; I don't often know what I'm saying.

We are asking the Maker of Peace in the high places, or heavens, to make peace for us. To me, praying for peace is the easy way out; we should not be praying for it -- it's our responsibility to make it happen. We are the makers of our own peace. Further, I propose that peace in this context should be seen as both macro and micro; community peace and personal peace.

So how do we make or achieve this harmony – both communally and personally.

Perhaps peace in the high places can be thought of as completeness or tranquility. We come together as a group of people in search of personal peace. Our sanctuary is our sanctuary, the place where we are both a community and also individuals.

On some level, communal peace is easier. I know what it looks like, although perhaps not how to do it -- end world hunger, abolish all weapons, a chicken in every pot, and a good education for all. It's concrete, and each one of us probably all has our own version of communal peace, whether it's world peace or peace between red and blue states.

So what is personal peace? For me it is the internal fight to accept reality and to allow all my feelings to co-exist – the ones that are difficult and the ones that are easy. Everyone suffers, and yes I can say that I've had more than most, although less than some, because of my daughter

Amy. I am, at times, wounded and sad. I believe that I've made peace with it, and most of the time, although not always, I feel that I have.

Many years ago I worked with a wise Israeli. Amy was young and David and I were just beginning to grapple with and understand the magnitude of our daughter. I cried and said "I want to see her walk". I would have horrible visions of her being a full grown sixteen year old and having only the gross motor development of an infant. And my wise Israeli friend said that Moses wandered for forty years and never saw the promised land, so you will be in good company. Accept reality and do not deny your sad feelings.

I've come full circle to my question as to why this particular prayer is said so often. Perhaps we say this prayer more often than most because making peace, whether communal or personal, is so important and we need to remind ourselves often that it's something that we all need to do.

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Shalom. Shalom. Shalom.

It means hello, goodbye—and above all, it is a word for peace.

Peace is also a homonym...for piece, a morsel, an interlocking element of a puzzle, a part of a larger whole.

The prayer Oseh Shalom asks God, who creates peace on high, to bring peace to us here on Earth. What are we really asking?

When I pray I ask to know God's will for me. This is my God, my only one, as we sing here each Friday night. It is the same God whose wish for me is Tikkun Olam: that I, along with you and you and you, repair the world.

In other words, to pick up the shards of goodness in this shattered paradise God created, and with acts of kindness, turn each piece into peace.

This prayer begs the question, then: is it up to God to create peace for us, or is it up to us to try to keep working toward peace with each other?

Surely human history shows how we have failed at making peace on Earth, again and again. But at the same time, we continue to try. What can we do to begin to get it right?

The funny thing is, the answer is right here, right now.

Peace begins each Friday at sundown.

Our prayer is answered with Shabbat. Here is how David Hartman describes it:

The setting sun ushers in a unit of time where the flowers of the field stand over and against man as equal members of the universe. I am forbidden to pluck the flower or to do with it as I please; at sunset the flower becomes a "thou" to me with a right to existence regardless of its value for me.

I stand silently before nature as before a fellow creature of God and not as a potential object of my control, and I must face the fact that I am [human] and not God.

Oseh Shalom is a call to God to pay attention, a prayer whose hope is that we are worthy of protection and good will. What I love is that it is a prayer answered as we welcome each Sabbath bride. Shabbat Shalom!