

### **Sermonette 3: Understanding the other**

**Optimists and pessimists die the same way. They just live differently. I prefer to live as an optimist. Shimon Peres**

**If a problem has no solution, it may not be a problem, but a fact - not to be solved, but to be coped with over time. Shimon Peres**

**When you have two alternatives, the first thing you have to do is to look for the third that you didn't think about, that doesn't exist. Shimon Peres**

**The United States is the only power in history that became great by giving and not by taking. I think the crisis was when the United States had more money than ideas. Money doesn't produce money. Ideas produce money. Shimon Peres**

When you have an impoverished person living among you in the land you are being given, do not be stingy or selfish when interacting with the other person. Be open-handed when helping the person work towards replacing what was lost. Do not worry about being paid back for your efforts, or about any outside financial reality which would convince you to refrain from providing help, as then they will complain against you to God, and you would be in the wrong. Do not begrudge what you give as Tzedakah, since the only reason you have money in the first place is to help provide some of it to others. As there will always be somebody who is financially on their way down, it is proper to keep your hand open to those in need. (Deuteronomy 15:7-11)

**You're as young as your dreams, not as old as your calendar. Shimon Peres**

The surroundings and the traditions upheld today help us to focus on two things. First, God's messengers. The way we afflict ourselves echo what we have been taught about the nature of Angels. They have no need for intimacy, food or drink. They also do not need to attempt to look better through make-up or become aromatically attractive through perfume. Naturally enough, any clothing one might think is seen upon them is an illusion at best. All of these things are what we avoid today. Eating, drinking, doing extraordinary things to look attractive, physical connections with our spouses and wearing leather. Second, death, which is a fact we need to cope with, and not yet merely a problem to which there is a solution. I wear white today because white is the color of the final suit I will

ever wear. Seeing this, I am reminded that the time available for me personally to help improve the world is limited. The time available in which the world might improve is far longer, and only God knows for sure what that span is.

One of the movies we watched recently as one of the monthly movie nights was Danny Kaye's *Me and the Colonel*. A tagline of his was "there are always two possibilities" which I was reminded of when I read Shimon Peres' statement about the two alternatives. In the movie, the alternative that Danny's character usually acted upon would, for the rest of us, be Shimon's third alternative, that choice we had not seen. When we can optimistically go beyond the usual choices of life and death, and decide to work towards a better life for the world as a whole, while understanding that family (however that is defined) is also part of the world and worth helping, then we will have made the best choice that we can. It is important to help those who are suffering, as many of you have done by bringing food items for the James McKinnon Memorial Food Drive. I do remind you that it is also important to notice those who are suffering within our community and congregation, and to help out when you can.