

**ENGAGING THE OTHER**  
**Brenda Naomi Rosenberg**  
**June 22, 2007 Temple Beth EL**

**Shabbat Shalom.**

**My thanks to Rabbi Syme for giving me this wonderful opportunity to address our congregation tonight. But most of I want to thank Rabbi Syme for his continuous support of outreach efforts... the Gospel Seder with our sister church greater New Mt Mariah, the Glazer institute where each year we invite Muslims and Christians to learn more about Judaism from Jewish scholars, the Great Lakes Regional Concerts with Kirk in the Hills and St Hugo's, being our advisor and twice partnering on presentations of Reuniting the Children of Abraham...a tool kit for peace, and just a few weeks ago having to deal with an unfortunate fender bender as you were ministering a grieving family, you still came to the temple to meet the group of Muslim Asian journalists I was hosting so they could meet a Rabbi. The 8 men and 2 women were heads of T.V. networks, radio stations and newspapers; they had never met a Rabbi, or been in a synagogue. The Journalist held many stereo types and truths very different than ours, yet they stayed an extra hour to learn more. I am truly grateful to you and the Rebbitzen, my dear friend Dr. Jill Syme for your support and opening the doors of Beth El to all.**

**I share with my Rabbi and so many others here tonight the importance of engaging the OTHER. In the words of Pope Benedict "inter religious inter cultural and inter racial dialogue are not options, but a vital necessity of our time".**

**Over the past few years I have am continuously confronted and questioned: is dialogue effective? Is it really viable? Do we really have partners? Can we measure success?**

**As someone who engages in this daily, allow me to make the case for the absolute necessity for the challenging but essential interaction.**

**WE MUST ENGAGE THE OTHER BECAUSE OUR VERY EXSISTANCE DEPENDS ON IT.**

**IF CIVILIZATION IS TO SURVIVE WE MUST WORK TOGETHER AND HEAL OUR COMMUNITIES.**

**WE MUST ENGAGE THE OTHER BECAUSE WE ARE ALL CONNECTED.**

**In the words of Rabbi David Rosen from Jerusalem “IF WE DON’T LEARN TO LIVE IN MUTUAL RESPECT THAN WE ARE CONDEMMED TO MUTUAL DISTRUCTION.”**

**Any place in which a single human suffers we all suffer. Everyday the news is filled with overwhelming stories of hate, violence, atrocities, and genocides. We need to be deeply committed to the welfare and security of all people. Unless there is peace and security for Israeli’s, Palestinians, Ethiopians, Sudanese, Middle East Christians, Iraqi Sunni’s Shiites and Kurds and the numerous other global tragedies their can be no real peace for any of us. We are all affected. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr. “We must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools.”**

**Our common goal must be to create understanding, end suffering and restore dignity and security to all.**

**Some may call me a dreamer... some naive, but I still believe Peace is possible because Change is possible. People can change. We all have within us the possibility to change.**

**I have seen first hand perceptions change and human relationships change. I have so many stories but I would like to share just a few. I have seen the surprised look from Jews hearing first hand from a Palestinian that he was forced to leave his home at gun point in 1948. I have seen Arabs in America shocked to learn that Israeli Arabs had not only a voice in the Knesset but were religiously and institutionally funded by the Israeli government. I saw first hand an Arab and Jew share tears as they told each other their stories ...the Arab lost 20 relatives in Lebanon last summer, the Jew told how he grew up without aunts ,uncles or grandparents...he lost over 40 relatives in the Holocaust. My interfaith partners came to our Holocaust center to stand with us when Iran hosted the Holocaust denial conference. Eide Alawan, our Muslim partner from Dearborn read the statement: “the Holocaust denial conference was an insult to all humanity... an unacceptable act denying historical sufferings of the Jewish people”. When a mosque and then a church were vandalized our partners were there to support and offer condolences. Hearts were opened. Minds have been changed. With out the dialogue process such meetings never would have taken place.**

**We can break the cycles of ignorance, fear, hate and violence that are destroying our world**

**But we can not act alone.**

**Our first partnership needs to be with GOD. Yes GOD**

**Imagine what could happen if we included God in healing our conflicts. Think about our great conflicts: the Middle East, Iraqi, the Sudan, our own segregated city and suburbs.**

**Yet, God has never been included in any of the conflict resolution meetings, negotiations or co- existence sessions for any of these conflicts.**

**One of the key reasons for the stagnation of the Peace process is the overly secular approach. When conflicts are religious, cultural, political, and emotionally charged all issues must be addressed by the experts in those areas. God and psychotherapists have been missing from the table.**

**Praying and connecting to GOD is a powerful tool for healing that is not being used. Some might consider this idea radical, but we now have compelling empirical evidence and data... over 20 years of research from well respected Doctors at Harvard, Duke and other Universities that clearly illustrates the power of prayer in healing.**

**Our prayers can be a powerful force for good. We need to bring together people of Faith. Together we must ask GOD to be our partner ... together as one voice we need to ask GOD to help us heal.**

**But asking God to help us heal is not enough. We need to be Gods foot solders. We need to put feet to our prayers.**

**And we need to stop kidding ourselves. We needed to get Saddam Hussein out of power, we need to make powerless all the Al Quida's and Ben Laudens.... because change is necessary. But just their absences are hardly sufficient. We need to roll up our sleeves and address the core issues and look at the root causes of Ignorance, Fear, Hate, and lack of respect.**

**We need to understand the deep and unconscious psychological issues; the Trans generational wounding. We need to comprehend the root of our own fears, frustrations and the fears and frustrations of others, and we need to find the courage to discuss them... to listen to each others pain and frustrations. Unless we address the root cause the problems are not going to go away.**

**We need to stop the teaching of HATE. Every conflict begins with Hate...hate leads to fear ... fear leads to demonizing, and demonizing leads to dehumanizing. Once an enemy is objectified and seen as an evil, wicked, threatening non human monster, the killing and destroying of that dehumanized target; be it an entire race, tribe, religion or culture becomes a defensive virtue. This is how minds are manipulated, and reigns of terror begin.**

**We must also address the other core issues of Ignorance and the lack of a respect. We need to learn about each other what we have in common and where we differ.**

**We need to teach respect and equality for all. Enlightened conflict resolution can only exist in an atmosphere of equality. No one person is entitled to more respect or understanding than another, no one person's feelings are more important than another's.**

**We need to let go of the need for dominance, control, or power over others.**

**We need to communicate our concerns, deepen our understanding of our different narratives, and advance our joint principles. We need to stop fueling blame.**

**Jordan's King Abdullah believes that "we must help people on both sides believe that making a difficult peace is far less costly than continuing a destructive conflict." "To achieve peace, patterns of fear, resentment, mistrust and indifference to the suffering of others must be broken. Sides that have long defined themselves in opposition to each other must create a new psychology. Societies and individuals alike must reorient themselves to a future that rewards productivity and cooperation, not confrontation."**

**We no longer can teach as isolated faiths, cultures, or races.**

**As we reach out to GOD together... we must reach out to each other and engage more likeminded people to join with us.... across all faiths, cultures and races. We must marshal the efforts of people willing to unite through prayer, compassionate listening, spiritual dialogue, the creative arts, joint business ventures, and community service.**

**The good news is we already have many in our community and many are here tonight.**

**We have the Michigan Round Table for Diversity and Inclusion Inter- Faith Partners. I would like to introduce Victor Begg, the founder of IFP and the most amazing partner any Jewish person could have. Victor and I have accomplished so much together. As thrilled and honor as I am to speak here this evening Victor has arranged for me to present Reuniting the Children of Abraham at the Islamic Society of North America conference to over 40,000 Muslims.**

**Rev Ken Flowers, another partner leaves Sunday for Morocco to participate in Jewish Arab dialogue. As an African American Baptist ministry he will bring a healing spirit to the discussions.**

**I am also please to invite all of you to a historical break thru in interfaith efforts. Please join with us, the AJC and my friends, the Farbman family next Thursday June 28<sup>th</sup> as we build bridges of understanding with books. Together with Muslim leaders we are paving the way to break down the barriers of misunderstanding, incorrect information, and prejudice that so easily can divide us. At 2 p.m. Imam Abdulla El Amin will receive the first mini Jewish library at the Detroit Muslim Center and at 4 pm Imam Steve Mustapha Elturk at the IONA mosque in Warren will receive his mini library. In August 2 more mosques will be recipients. I have press releases outside for more details.**

**I would also like to introduce several friends from the Muslim community; Sophia Begg Latif, and her husband**

**Farhan who meet at a Children of Abraham presentation, fell in love and married last summer. Their our best love story. Sophia was one of the writers and stars in the documentary.**

**Shahina Begg who co founded Wisdom a wonderful group of woman of many faiths that have come together for community service and dialogue. On July 8<sup>th</sup> they are having their next program a dinner and showing of PEACE X PEACE a fantastic documentary of peace efforts by woman from around the world. Shahina Begg has flyers with more information.**

**And my newest friend, Aaron Michael Beydoun, an American Muslim of Lebanese descent who I met just last night at a Jewish Lebanese dinner dialogue. Aaron, 21 years old and still in school shared with us his remarkable project and Website the Jews of Lebbanon.org. He has created an NGO to help restore the destroyed synagogue in Beirut Lebanon.**

**Others I would also like to recognize:**

**Tarek Dawud, dear friend and Christian Arab partner, Motoko Huthwaite, Japanese Christian from Fort Street Presbyterian church and Jacob Rosen from Temple Kol Ami who met tonight to plan a RTCOA. Another friend from the Arab community Lila Cheri, and Tali Ben Joseph, Israeli friend, mother of one of the writers and support staff for RTCOA.**

**And my loving family.... husband Howard, our parents Ed and Shirley Rosenberg.**

**Locally we also have The World Sabbath for Religious Reconciliation in its 7<sup>th</sup> year. Nationally, we have the US**



**Inter-religious Committee for Peace, A Different Future, and Woman for Peace. Internationally, The Council for a Parliament of the Worlds Religions, The World Conference of Religions for Peace, and the Inter-religious Council, to name a few. Sadly, our efforts do not make the 6 o'clock news, many of us connect by email but we are not unified and organized. This is what needs to happen.**

**We are a powerful force for good. We need to walk together, raise our voices together, and stand up for equality, justice and freedom together. Together with God as our partner we are mightier than weapons of destructions.**

**I would like to end tonight with a passage from Kahlil Gibran that Aaron Beydoun emailed me last night "You are my brother and I love you. I love you worshipping in your church, your temple, your mosque. You and I and all are children of one religion, for the varied paths of religion are but the fingers of the loving hand of the Supreme Being, extended to all, offering completeness of sprit to all, anxious to receive all."**

**Shabbat Shalom**