

# GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Based Community Organizing and Development

www.gatherthepeople.org

## FAMILY SIDDUR STUDY: LESSON PLAN 23

**WE'RE CONTINUING TODAY NEAR THE END OF THE AMIDAH ON PAGE 38.**

- Someone please read the Hebrew paragraph at the top of the page: שְׁלוֹם רַב עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ וְעַל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל תְּשִׁים לְעוֹלָם, כִּי אַתָּה הוּא מֶלֶךְ אֲדוֹן לְכָל־הַשְּׁלוֹם. וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל־עֵת וּבְכָל־שָׁעָה בְּשִׁלּוּמֶךָ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשִׁלּוֹם.
- Someone please read the English paragraph at the top of page 38.

**WHAT'S THE WORD THAT'S REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES IN BOTH THE HEBREW AND THE ENGLISH PARAGRAPHS AT THE TOP OF PAGE 38?**

- The word “peace” appears four times in the English.
- And, not surprisingly, the word “שְׁלוֹם” appears four times as well.
- So the definition of שְׁלוֹם seems obvious.
- *But what are the three root letters, the שׁוֹרֵשׁ, of “שְׁלוֹם,” the word that we usually see translated as “peace”?*
- The root letters are ש-ל-מ, which have the basic meaning of being *complete and in harmony*.
- That sounds kind of different than the word “peace.”
- *So what does it mean to be “complete and in harmony”?*

**CAN YOU THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOU DID NOT FEEL COMPLETE, WHEN YOU DIDN'T HAVE SOMETHING YOU NEEDED OR WANTED VERY MUCH, OR YOU FELT ASHAMED OR EMBARRASSED ABOUT SOMETHING YOU HAD DONE?**

- *Did you feel like you were in harmony?*
- *For example, did you ever tell a lie or steal something—and not get caught?*
  1. *Did you feel complete and in harmony?*
  2. *Did you ever get caught or decide on your own to tell the truth about something bad you did?*

**3. *After you got over feeling ashamed and embarrassed, did you feel more complete and in harmony?***

- Usually when we do the right thing, we feel more complete and in harmony—we feel a sense of peacefulness, like we’ve been blessed.

**SO IN THIS PRAYER WE’RE ASKING GOD TO BLESS US WITH THAT FEELING OF COMPLETENESS AND HARMONY THAT WE HAVE WHEN WE DO WHAT GOD WANTS US TO DO.**

- Now it says in the Hebrew: וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- Or in English: “May it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel.”
- Who is יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ, your people Israel?
  1. It does *not* say, “Please bless each one of us *individually* who does the right thing.”
  2. It says, please bless *all of us Jews*, the Jewish people, who do the right thing.
- ***What do you think that means—does the whole Jewish people deserve God’s blessing?***
- If we want to have the blessing of peace that comes when we’ve done the right thing—the feeling we’re complete and in harmony—we have to do more than just mind our own business or just take care of ourselves.

**WHAT MORE CAN WE DO THAN MAKE SURE THAT EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US DOES THE RIGHT THING?**

- ***Have you ever been in a situation where you knew that someone was going to do something wrong—like be mean to someone, or take something that didn’t belong to that person, or cheat on a test?***
- ***Could you have done anything to stop it?***
- ***What could you or did you do?***
- ***Why should we do something when we see that someone else is going to do something wrong?***
- ***What’s the least we can do?*** [WARN THEM IT’S WRONG AND WILL LEAD TO BAD OUTCOMES FOR THEM AND OTHERS]
- ***If no one speaks up when people start to lie and cheat and steal or become abusive and cruel, what happens?***

**SO THIS PRAYER IS REMINDING US OF SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT.**

- If we want to have God’s blessing of peace—so our life is complete and in harmony, we have to be sure we don’t do bad things.
- But we also have to help other people when we can so they don’t do bad things either.

**BUT CAN THERE BE PEACE AND HARMONY IF ALL OF US INDIVIDUALLY TRY TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT BUT LARGER PROBLEMS, LIKE POVERTY AND INJUSTICE, REMAIN?**

- *What kinds of things can we do together with other people to repair the world so that poverty, oppression, injustice, and destruction of the environment are lessened and eventually eliminated?*
- *Have you personally done anything together with other people to achieve those goals and, if so, what kind of experience did you have?*
- Hillel, a Jewish religious leader, who lived about two thousand years ago, said something like: If not us, who? And if not now, when?
- He meant to inspire people to act, not to wait for someone else to step up, because when we're inactive or indifferent to things like poverty, oppression, injustice, and environmental destruction, our silence makes it possible for those things to continue.
- *If you've been a bystander and haven't joined with others to repair the world, perhaps you should reconsider why you're reluctant to act?*