

*Will you pray with me and for me...*

In a week when the sorrows of the world weighed heavily on my heart, I found myself writing in circles, wondering how I could find words to inspire us as a community to see *peace*, the spiritual gift of this second week of Advent. Yet it was also a week where my spiritual practices-- reading poetry, praying, meditating, writing-- held my heart firm in moments of peace. So this week, I have some of those words from wise voices, and an invitation to hear these words, and experience together an extended time of meditation to lead us into peace.

Peace is an inner state of well-being and calm. It is also an outer project of promoting nonviolence, conflict resolution, and cooperation in the world. The root of the Hebrew word for peace, "shalom," means "whole" and points to this twofold meaning: peace within oneself and peace between people. [Spirituality and Practice](#)

[Islam: \(There is of course, much more, but these highlights resonated...\)](#)

- understand that islam means "peace" or "submission" and the surrender of your desires to the Divine Order
- affirm "There is no god but God" and trust in the spiritual nature of reality
- feel a connection to a cycle of prayer spanning the globe five times a day
- mirror God's beneficence by giving generously to others
- face all trials and tests with gratitude and patience
- work to establish an economically and socially just society
- reflect upon the value of pilgrimage...
- be hospitable to other faith perspectives and the long line of prophets

Judaism: (there is, of course, much more, but these resonated...)

- walk the path of blessings
- pave your days with positive intentions and good deeds
- make your contribution to the repair the world (tikkun olam)
- recognize the sparks of God present throughout the whole creation
- discover the spiritual benefits of observing the Sabbath
- draw closer to God through rituals and holiday observances
- celebrate joy and laughter
- rejoice that the world created by God is good and meant to be enjoyed
- pursue justice in the way of the ancient prophets of Israel

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**Let There be Peace**

In a world of injustice,

Sacred Spirit,

let there be peace.

In a world of hatred,

Sacred Spirit,

let there be peace.

In a world of violence,

Sacred Spirit,

let there be peace.

In a world of anger,

Sacred Spirit,

let there be peace.

In a world of prejudice,

Sacred Spirit,

let there be peace.

In a world of fear,

Sacred Spirit,

let there be peace.  
In a world of hunger,  
Sacred Spirit,  
let there be peace.  
In a world of thirst,  
Sacred Spirit,  
let there be peace.  
In a world of brokenness,  
Sacred Spirit,  
let there be peace.  
In a world of cruelty,  
Sacred Spirit,  
let there be peace.

— Debora L. Jennings in *Lifting Women's Voices: Prayers to Change the World* by Margaret Rose, Jenny Te Paa, Jeanne Person, Abigail Nelson

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Naomi Shihab Nye is a poet and author whose father was a Palestinian refugee and her mother an American of German and Swiss descent. She spent her adolescence in both Jerusalem and San Antonio, Texas.

### **The Words Under the Words**

[BY NAOMI SHIHAB NYE](#)

*for Sitti Khadra, north of Jerusalem*

My grandmother's hands recognize grapes,  
the damp shine of a goat's new skin.  
When I was sick they followed me,  
I woke from the long fever to find them  
covering my head like cool prayers.

My grandmother's days are made of bread,  
a round pat-pat and the slow baking.  
She waits by the oven watching a strange car  
circle the streets. Maybe it holds her son,  
lost to America. More often, tourists,  
who kneel and weep at mysterious shrines.  
She knows how often mail arrives,  
how rarely there is a letter.  
When one comes, she announces it, a miracle,  
listening to it read again and again  
in the dim evening light.

My grandmother's voice says nothing can surprise her.  
Take her the shotgun wound and the crippled baby.  
She knows the spaces we travel through,  
the messages we cannot send—our voices are short  
and would get lost on the journey.  
Farewell to the husband's coat,  
the ones she has loved and nourished,  
who fly from her like seeds into a deep sky.  
They will plant themselves. We will all die.

My grandmother's eyes say Allah is everywhere, even in death.  
When she talks of the orchard and the new olive press,  
when she tells the stories of Joha and his foolish wisdoms,  
He is her first thought, what she really thinks of is His name.  
“Answer, if you hear the words under the words—  
otherwise it is just a world with a lot of rough edges,  
difficult to get through, and our pockets full of stones.”

Naomi Shihab Nye, “The Words Under the Words” from *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems*  
(Portland, Oregon: Far Corner Books, 1995). Copyright © 1995 by Naomi Shihab Nye.

## **A Prayer for the World**

By Rabbi Harold Kushner

Let the rain come and wash away  
the ancient grudges,  
the bitter hatreds  
held and nurtured over generations.

Let the rain wash away the memory  
of the hurt, the neglect.

Then let the sun come out and  
fill the sky with rainbows.

Let the warmth of the sun heal us  
wherever we are broken.

Let it burn away the fog so that  
we can see each other clearly.

Let the warmth and brightness  
of the sun melt our selfishness.

So that we can share the joys and  
feel the sorrows of our neighbors.

And let the light of the sun  
be so strong that we will see all  
people as our neighbors.

Let the earth, nourished by rain,  
bring forth flowers  
to surround us with beauty.

And let the mountains  
teach our hearts to reach upward to heaven. Amen