

WL Shabbat 2026: *Oseh Shalom D'var Torah*

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It seems that no matter the time or place, there are troubles. Whether abroad, including in our homeland of Israel, or here, people are struggling and tensions fill the air. So, is it out of touch to hope for, or even go as far as embrace, peace? After all, that is what Jewish history is built upon.

During the destruction of the Temple, Jews clung to their heritage as we entered exile. During the Holocaust, Jews still lit Shabbat candles and wrapped *tefillin*. In the wake of October 7th, Jews proudly wore their *yarmulkes* and Star-of-David necklaces. These examples and countless more were not simply a quiet form of resistance, but actions in a search for inner and outer peace. Peace is not only something to experience between you and a neighbor, but also something we search for within ourselves, in the constant battle against fear or any other imprisoning emotion, whether inflicted upon us by the world or ourselves.

Every day, multiple times a day, we pray to the “Maker of Peace”—*Oseh Shalom*. We do not give this title to God conditionally. We do not call God *Oseh Shalom* only when we feel at peace. We do not call God *Oseh Shalom* when the world feels balanced. We say the words *Oseh Shalom bimromav, hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol-yisrael*—may the One who makes peace in the heavens, make peace for us and all the people of Israel—every day.

We are telling God that God is not only what we experience, but what we want to see in the world. God is a manifestation of all of our hopes, including those that seem farthest away. While we were in Egypt, freedom seemed unattainable. During the Holocaust, death seemed to overcome life. After October 7th, safety and security seemed questionable. Yet we called upon *Oseh Shalom*, every day during those times and every day since.

The prayer is famous in many melodies, including one by Debbie Friedman. However, the song is often recited in a familiar tune that many of us know, with a melody that switches between major and minor, joy and sorrow. The tune that has become as familiar as a folk song was written in 1969 by Nurit Hirsch, an Israeli composer. “I composed this song with words from the *Kaddish*, and I am especially tied to it; it

expresses my deep connection to the Jewish people, and every time I hear people sing it, it moves me like it's the first time," she said at a 2013 performance.

The fact that this tune, which captures a delicate dance and harmony between mourning and uplift, is applied to *Oseh Shalom*, specifically, is quite apt.

The line comes from Job, chapter 25, verse 2: "Dominion and fear are God's; God imposes peace in God's heights." There is something to be said for the fact that "fear" and "peace" are mentioned as coming from the same source. Two emotions that one may think are at odds with each other both coming from the source of life itself.

But maybe it makes sense; maybe fear doesn't simply lead to peace, but it causes one to impose peace. Just like our minds trick us into fear, with the help of God, we trick it to a state of peace, forcing ourselves to feel calm even when the world around us is noisy.

The Malbim, a 19th-century rabbi and Torah commentator, says the following about the verse: "Although God has delegated certain powers to the innumerable forces of nature, they remain subject to God's overall charge and control, thus ensuring that they operate in harmony." Just as there is a harmony between the major and minor chords of Nurit's soul-stirring composition of the *Oseh Shalom* prayer, the source of the prayer reminds us that not only do fear and hope come from God, but God allows them to exist in harmony rather than simply coexist.

This is why we, as Jews, seek the "Maker of Peace"—*Oseh Shalom*—in moments that seem the opposite of peaceful. To be a lamplighter of the world is to impose peace in a world at war, impose peace on our neighbor who is at odds with us, and to impose peace on our community with all of its tensions. This is to live a Godly life; to remember that the same well from which your fear flows is the same one that you can draw peace from.

And this is the theme of this year's Torah Fund Campaign.

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