



Someday, Little Children

December 2025/Kislev 5785 | Cantor Paula Pepperstone

Growing up in the 1970's and '80's, we had two Sesame Street albums, one of which included "Someday, Little Children." This song by Jeff Moss, and sung in two episodes by the character of Susan (the amazing Loretta Long), absolutely had my attention. I played it over and over on the turntable in our playroom. I danced to it, I sang to it, and the words and music have played in my head for more than forty-five years:

"Someday, little children, someday soon...
Someday, little children, in a world I'm dreaming of
There's gonna be a lotta people, yeah
Living in peace and love
Yeah living in peace and love someday
To last a hundred lifetimes through
You know who's gonna make it happen?
Well, it might be you, someday my little children
Living in peace and love, someday my little children, yeah
It might be you, little children
Come someday, hey, hey, hey.
Come someday, hey, hey, hey."

Susan gave me my mission: help others live in peace and love. Years later, I realized that working toward a world where people "live in peace and love" is an overarching goal in my life, and by extension, my goal for social justice, and it clearly aligns with our mitzvot and values.

Peace/shalom is not the absence of war; shalom shares its root with shalem/wholeness. To live in peace, to feel whole and secure, our laws need to protect all of us, and we need confidence in our judicial system, equitable access to opportunity, and to live in a society that values every person's inherent dignity.

We know our society and its laws must apply to everyone because the Torah repeatedly reminds us to be mindful of the needs of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. In a patriarchal society, where there is no male protector for the stranger (or immigrant), the orphan, nor the widow, these three groups of people require protection to be built into the law because it's too easy to neglect them, or worse, act against them. If we had been continually caring for the vulnerable when the Torah was redacted, it wouldn't remind us dozens of times to protect them and

their interests. As Kohelet says, “There’s nothing new under the sun,” and we have these same shortcomings today. Therefore, we need legal protections for vulnerable populations because we don’t inherently prioritize caring for them, which limits their chances of real peace.

For example, if members of the LGBTQ+, Black, or immigrant communities are worried about their safety they don’t feel peace, if a pregnant woman can’t get the medical care she needs to save her life she isn’t safe, if the most defenseless amongst us can’t easily access quality food they don’t feel peace, if laws aren’t enforced and upheld by our judges, elected officials, and law enforcement we can’t feel safe... in short, if we’re not caring for the undefended, then they won’t have safety and security.

When we are mindful of the dignity of all and treat everyone with compassion, we act with love. This is the mitzvah of *V’ahavta l’rei-akha kamokha*—love your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:18). Rabbi Elijah Benamozegh teaches in his 19th-century Torah commentary, *Em LaMikra*, that “your neighbor” extends to not only your community, but to all human beings. When we think about the needs of others, it’s natural to initially only consider people like ourselves, but that’s not enough, and it’s not what the Torah demands of us. Ramban says about this verse that, “One should love their neighbor in all matters as they love themselves—for all good things.” Anything I want for myself, I should also want for everyone. Combining that with the Torah’s reminders to care for those with less status or power, our mission becomes clear.

Wanting equality and justice for ourselves is instinctual. Working for a peaceful and safe existence for those we may not even know? That is the embodiment of love, and that is the work of social justice.

“You know who’s gonna make it happen?
Well, it might be you, someday my little children...”