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# SHALOM

*Jewish Peace Letter*

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*From Where I Sit***Shalom will be back in early September**

STEFAN MERKEN  
is chair of the Jewish  
Peace Fellowship.

**S**halom will not be published in July and August. We'll be back in early September. In the meantime we invite you to write a short article, a letter to the editor, a comment about Shalom, or a poem. The deadline for our September issue is August 10th, so you have plenty of time to think and create. ☆

*Great Antiwar films***Catch-22**

*Directed by Mike Nichols, U.S.A., 1970*

**T**he film adaptation of Joseph Heller's treatment of the "normal" insanity of the war system is based on his own wartime experiences.

**Paths of Glory**

*Directed by Stanley Kubrick, U.S.A., 1957*

**A** Stanley Kubrick film starring Kirk Douglas. A general sends his men on a suicide mission. When the mission fails, a few soldiers are arbitrarily selected to be tried—and executed—for cowardice. ☆

BUTLER SHAFFER  
is a professor at Southwestern  
University  
School of Law.

*The Way It's Always Done***Kent State:  
In Memoriam**

MURRAY POLNER

**I**t's been 48 years since Ohio National Guardsmen on May 4, 1970 aimed their M-1 rifles at unarmed Kent State College students and killed four and wounded nine others. You have to be at least 55-60 years of age to have a vivid memory of the events. Despite several trials, a presidential commission, articles galore, a flood of books and protests, and the creation of a splendid archive, the May 4th Collection at the KSU Library, no one was ever seriously punished but for the imposition of a very small fine. But to me, the bloodied campus represented the way things have always been done here in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave: Shooting and killing striking workers, African Americans, radicals, religious dissenters, Native Americans, antiwar people. Gun 'em down, mythological cowboy style, and get away with it. The truth as a handful of intrepid historians have pointed out is that had there not been a Cold War mentality there would never have been a Vietnam. And had there not have been a Vietnam War there would never have been a bloodbath at Kent State. ☆

MURRAY POLNER  
is co-editor of  
SHALOM.

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## Music as Resistance

# Brave Pianist: Maria Yudina

Jim Forest



**A**rmando Iannucci's recent film, *The Death of Stalin* (2017), briefly filled the two Moscow cinemas where it was being shown but then was abruptly banned. The movie was described as an "unfriendly act by the British intellectual class" by Nikolai Starikov, head of the Russian Great Fatherland Party, and as part of a "western plot to destabilize Russia by causing rifts in society," by the head of the Public Council of the Russian Ministry of Culture.

In fact, the film provides, in the form of a *Dr. Strangelove*-sort of black comedy, a remarkably accurate portrait of the end of Stalin's ruthless reign and the subsequent battle for leadership among those in his inner circle. Though only Stalin looks like his historical self, the casting is superb. My only disappointment was the portrayal of the great Russian pianist, Maria Yudina.

In the film she is young and glamorous and, though despising Stalin, willing to make a special recording for him in exchange for a bribe of thousands of rubles.

The actual Yudina was very different. I have come to know her indirectly through the memoirs of her friend and one-time classmate, the composer Dmitri Shostakovich, as related by Solomon Volkov in his book, *Testimony* (1979), and also through Tatiana Voogd, a founder of our Russian Orthodox parish in Amsterdam, who knew Yudina personally and even slept under her piano—"the most sheltered place in her apartment," she told me.

It was Maria Yudina's fate to live through the Bolshevik Revolution (she was eighteen at the time) and its aftermath, seeing many of her dearest friends and colleagues disappear into the Gulag. Fearlessly, even recklessly, she wore a cross even while teaching or performing in public—an affirmation of belief at a time when any display of religious faith could cost one's work, one's freedom, even one's life. In contrast to the on-screen portrayal, she lived an ascetic life, wearing no makeup, spending little on herself, and dressing simply. "I had the impression," said Shostakovich, "that Yudina wore the same black dress during her entire long life, it was so worn and soiled."

For her, music was a way of proclaiming her faith in a period when printing presses were more stringently policed than pianos. "Yudina saw music in a mystical light. For instance she saw Bach's *Goldberg Variations* "as a series of illustrations to the Holy Bible," said Shostakovich. "She always played as though she were giving a sermon."

She would not only perform piano works but sometimes pause during concerts to read poetry by such writers as Boris Pasternak, himself unable to publish at the time. (Pasternak did the first reading of his novel *Doctor Zhivago* at Yudina's apartment in 1947.)

Yudina was notorious among friends for her inability to keep anything of value for herself. "She came to see me once," Shostakovich recalled, "and said that she was living in a miserable little room where she could neither work nor rest. So I signed a petition, I went to see various bureaucrats, I asked a lot of people to help, I took up a lot of people's time. With great difficulty we got an apartment for Yudina. You would think that everything was fine and that life could go on. A short time later she came to me again and asked for help in obtaining an apartment for herself. 'What? But we got an apartment for you. What do you need another one for?' 'I gave the apartment away to a poor old woman.'"

Shostakovich heard from a friend that he had made a loan to Yudina of five rubles. "I broke a window in my room, it's drafty and so cold, I can't live like that," she had told them. "Naturally, they gave her the money—it was winter. A while later they visited her, and it was as cold in her room as it was outside and the broken window was stuffed with a rag. 'How can this be, Maria Veniaminovna? We gave you money to fix the window.' And she replied, 'I gave it for the needs of the church.'"

Shostakovich, who regarded religion as superstition, didn't approve. "The church may have various needs," he protested, "but the clergy doesn't sit around in the cold, after all, with broken windows. Self-denial should have a rational limit." He accused her of behaving like a *yurodivye*, the Russian word for a holy fool, a special category of sanctity.

Her public profession of faith was not without cost. Despite her genius as a musician, from time to time she was banned from concert halls, and not once in her life was she allowed to travel outside Russia.

"Her religious position was under constant artillery and even cavalry attack [at the music school in Leningrad]," Shostakovich remembered.

Serebriakov, the director then, had a habit of making so-called 'raids of the light brigade'. ... He realized that Yudina was a first-class pianist, but he wasn't willing to risk his own position. One of the charges of the light brigade was made specifically against her. The cavalry rushed into Yudina's class and demanded of Yudina: "Do you believe in God?" She replied in the affirmative.



Maria Yudina

*Continued on next page*



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## Continued from page 3

“Was she promoting religious propaganda among her students?” She replied that the Constitution didn’t forbid it. A few days later a transcript of the conversation made by ‘an unknown person’ appeared in a Leningrad paper, which also printed a caricature—Yudina in nun’s robes surrounded by kneeling students. And the caption was something about preachers appearing at the Conservatoire. The cavalry trod heavily, even though it was the light brigade. Naturally, Yudina was dismissed after that.

From time to time she all but signed her own death warrant. Perhaps the most remarkable story in Shostakovich’s memoir concerns one such incident, dramatized inaccurately in the film:

In his final years, Stalin seemed more and more like a madman, and I think his superstition grew. The “Leader and Teacher” sat locked up in one of his many dachas, amusing himself

in bizarre ways. They say he cut out pictures and photos from old magazines and newspapers, glued them onto paper, and hung them on the walls.... [He] didn’t let anyone in to see him for days at a time. He listened to the radio a lot. Once Stalin called the Radio Committee ... and asked if they had a record of Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 23, which had been heard

on the radio the day before. “Played by Yudina,” he added. They told Stalin that of course they had it. Actually, there was no record, the concert had been live. But they were afraid to say no to Stalin, no one ever knew what the consequences might be. A human life meant nothing to him. All you could do was agree, submit, be a yes-man, a yes-man to a madman.

Yudina later told me that they had to send the conductor home, he was so scared he couldn’t think. They called another conductor, who trembled and got everything mixed up, confusing the orchestra. Only a third conductor was in any shape to finish the recording.

I think this is a unique event in the history of recording — I mean, changing conductors three times in one night. Anyway, the record was ready by morning. They made one single copy in record time and sent it to Stalin. Now that was a record. A record in yes-ing.

Soon after, Yudina received an envelope with twenty thousand rubles. She was told it came on the express orders of Stalin. Then she wrote him a letter. I know about this letter from her, and I know that the story seems improbable. Yudina had many quirks, but I can say this —

she never lied. I’m certain that her story is true. Yudina wrote something like this in her letter: “I thank you, Joseph Vissarionovich, for your aid. I will pray for you day and night and ask the Lord to forgive your great sins before the people and the country. The Lord is merciful and He will forgive you. I gave the money to the church that I attend.”

And Yudina sent this suicidal letter to Stalin. He read it and didn’t say a word. They expected at least a twitch of the eyebrow. Naturally, the order to arrest Yudina was prepared and the slightest grimace would

have been enough to wipe away the last traces of her. But Stalin was silent and set the letter aside in silence. The anticipated movement of the eyebrows didn’t come.

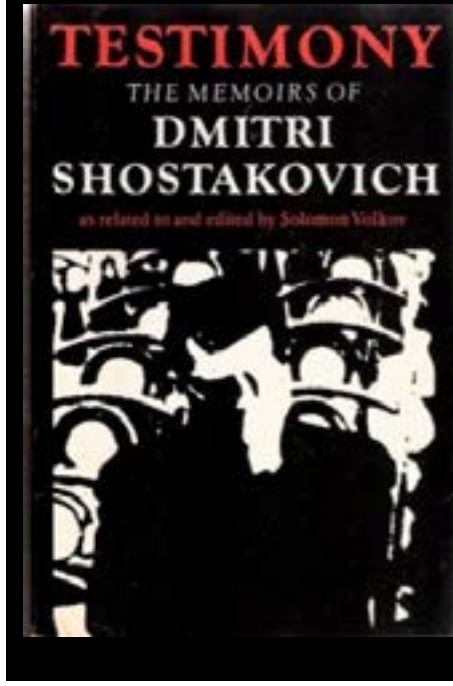
Nothing happened to Yudina. They say that her recording of the Mozart was on the record player when the “Leader and Teacher” was found dead in his dacha. It was the last thing he had listened to.”

Shostakovich found Yudina’s open display of belief foolish, yet one senses within his complaints both envy and awe. In a time of heart-stopping fear, here was someone as fearless as Saint George before the dragon, someone who preferred giving away her few rubles to repairing her own broken window, who “published” with her own voice the poems of banned writers, who dared to tell Stalin that even he was not beyond God’s mercy and forgiveness. She had a large and pure heart. No wonder her grave in Moscow has been a place of pilgrimage ever since she died, November 19, 1970. ✪

*Yudina sent Stalin a letter that could have spelled her death. She was as fearless as St. George before the dragon.*

**JIM FOREST’S**

most recent book is *At Play in the Lions’ Den: A Biography and Memoir of Daniel Berrigan* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017).

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*Holocaust Education***Holocaust Education: “I want my students to get the facts.”**

Patrick Henry

*Genocides feed off one another and are always a human possibility.*

A survey released in April on Holocaust Remembrance Day has unearthed a lack of basic knowledge of the Nazi genocide. Interviewed by phone or online were 1,350 American adults (18 and older). Millennials were 31 percent of the sample.

According to the [survey](#), 31 percent of all Americans and 41 percent of millennials (ages 18-34) believe that 2 million or fewer Jews were killed during the Holocaust, while 41 percent of Americans and 66 percent of millennials cannot say what Auschwitz was. The survey also revealed that 52 percent of Americans think incorrectly that Hitler came to power through force, and 22 percent of millennials “haven’t heard” or “are not sure if they have heard of the Holocaust.”

Other survey questions concerning the naming of countries where the Holocaust took place, the names of ghettos and concentration camps, and the persistence of anti-Semitism all yielded surprisingly low awareness rates.

This same survey should be given to millennials and others in states, such as Florida, New Jersey

and Illinois, where Holocaust education is mandated. Knowing the results in these states and comparing them to the overall results would give us a better idea of how effective we have been in Holocaust education. It might also encourage other states to mandate a similar curriculum.

Two weeks after the survey results were made public, *The New Yorker* magazine published an excellent article titled “The Hitler Vortex” by Alex Ross that highlights important aspects of the Holocaust that form no part of the survey’s questions.

Ross points out, for example, that when Hitler spoke of the need for “Lebensraum,” living space, in Eastern Europe, he “often had America in mind.” Hitler admired the way Americans wiped out millions of Native Americans to make their own living space.

As Ross also acknowledges, when skeptical cronies of Hitler suggested that he would never get away with his proposed mass murders, he retorted: “Who, after all, is today speaking about the destruction of the Armenians?”



*Holocaust survivors walk outside the gate of the Auschwitz Nazi death camp in Oswiecim, Poland, in 2015. A recent survey found 41 percent of Americans cannot say what Auschwitz was. (Alik Keplicz / AP)*

Ross emphasizes these points because he believes in the importance of viewing the Holocaust in the context of other genocides: “Only by stripping away [genocide’s] national regalia and comprehending its essential human form do we have any hope of vanquishing it.”

I stress them for the same reason. Genocides have happened before and after the Holocaust and can be seen in the case of the Holocaust to feed off one another. Hitler used the Native American genocide as a model for acquiring “Lebensraum” and indifference toward the Armenian genocide as a reason to go forth with his genocidal plans.

This is all the more reason to lament the fact that the United States and Israel, who are committed to Holocaust education, have never formally recognized the Armenian genocide.

Like all Holocaust educators, I believe in Holocaust education at the secondary and university levels, and I want my students to get the facts straight regarding the number of Jews slaughtered by the Nazis (about 6 million), the places where they were shot and gassed, the collaboration of others in this genocide, and the persistence of anti-Semitism almost 75 years after the end of World War II.

But I also expect them to know about and recognize other genocides, including our own. We should encourage a good deal of self-examination. As Ross points out, it’s appropriate to indicate that slavery was written into the U.S. Constitution and that Thomas Jefferson himself spoke of the need to “eliminate” or “extirpate” Native Americans.

We want our students to understand that genocide is always a human possibility. My friend, Berel Lang, insists that one of the greatest lessons of the Holocaust is that, “There is no here about which you can say, it can’t happen here.”

Isn’t it a terrible thing to have to say, 80 years after Hitler said it, “Who, after all, is today speaking about the destruction of the Armenians?” ☆

**PATRICK HENRY** is Cushing Eells Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Literature at Whitman College in Walla Walla. He is the author of *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France during the Holocaust*, and editor of *Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis*.

This article originally appeared as a “Special to *The Seattle Times*” on 21 May 2018 at <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/holocaust-education-i-want-my-students-to-get-the-facts/>. To see the report about the survey, go to <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/12/us/holocaust-education.html>.”

“What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?”—Mohandas Gandhi.

“Nonviolence in Peace and War”



United Methodist Conference Center at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

## Interfaith dialogue

# The Most Important Verse: A Sermon

### FORWARD

Phil Bentley

Being asked to preach at the Sunday morning closing service of an interfaith conference was, for me, a very great honor. It was also a great challenge. This was the ninth in a series of Interfaith Peace Conferences at the United Methodist Conference Center at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Usually the preacher at this service has been a Christian guest speaker. It would be my task to bring the conference to an inspiring close with thoughts people could take home with them. I took that very seriously.

This series of conferences was the brainchild of Rev. Wright Spears, a pulpit minister who had done much for inter-racial and interfaith relations in his career. The format involved bringing together religious figures from the three Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to address a theme. Having attended, planned, or led many conferences in my career I can say that nothing I had ever been a part of was like these events. We were able to bring leading experts from all over the world to speak at our conferences. Perhaps it has been the beautiful setting of Lake Junaluska, but there was something very special about the spirit I felt there.

The theme of this conference was “Meeting The Other: Can We Talk?” This idea of finding ways to help different kinds of people, people who believe different things, talk with and understand each other is on many people’s minds right now. I know that there are many programs and projects around the country addressing this theme.

I have been involved with one such program for decades—The Compassionate Listening Project. Their motto is, “An enemy is someone whose story you have not heard.”

Together with a friend who is about 180 degrees from my political views I started a discussion group to facilitate dialogue among people who hold a variety of political and social beliefs. We call ourselves the Curmudgeons. I hold very strong views but cannot regard myself as having a monopoly on right thinking. I learn far more from people I disagree with than from people I agree with.

What was my sermon’s theme going to be? We would have had three days of talking about dialogue among people of different faiths as well as social and political views. Many of our regulars would be fairly described as liberal Christians, but at this conference we also had forty rural pastors from all over the country who decided to combine their annual meeting with ours. That certainly increased the mix.

I asked myself, “What is the prerequisite for dialogue among different kinds of people?” My answer was that we are all people. We have our humanity in common. Each of the three Abrahamic traditions shares that idea. For several years I have been thinking, writing, and speaking about how I see Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as three faces of one faith, the faith of Abraham. This is hardly novel. Others have long pointed out that these three faiths have one common origin and one sense of tradition. The New Testament relies on the truth of the Jewish scriptures and the truth of Islam likewise rests on the prophets who came before Mohammed from Adam to Jesus.

My method of presenting this idea would use sources from all three faiths as if they were one source, which, in my thinking, they are. The result is the sermon that follows. I do not preach from a written out text, but from notes. In order to present this sermon here, I have gone back to my notes and made of them a readable (I hope) text.

*“An enemy is someone whose story you have not heard.”*



### THE SERMON

One day Jesus was talking with some Pharisees and one of them asked him a question.

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with

all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matt. 22:36-40)

Jesus’ answer was the Jewish answer and, what is more, the Pharisee answer to that question. A century later a group of Rabbis was holding a similar discussion on the same question. This was in the time of Rabbi Akiva, who usually gave the best and final answer, but not in this case.

Rabbi Akiva said the most important verse is, “And you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). But this time his colleague Ben Azzai bested him. “Ben Azzai teaches: ‘This is the written account of Adam’s family line. When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God’ (Gen. 5:1); this principle is the most fundamental” (Sifra on Leviticus 19:18).

If you ask most people who know scripture which is the most important, the most fundamental verse in the Torah, they are very likely to say, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” because it is the Torah’s version of The Golden Rule. Why would a verse most people would pay little attention to top that? Martin Buber noted that this verse could be correctly read, “You shall love your neighbor—he is like you.” The lack of clarity in Hebrew

makes TaNaKh difficult to translate, but that opens the way to multiple readings of the text. Rabbinic tradition says that every word in the Torah has seventy meanings, which is a way of saying countless meanings.

Here are the two verses that together show the principle at work here. This is the record of Adam’s line—“When God created humankind, it was made in

the likeness of God; male and female were they created. And, when they were created, [God] blessed them and called them Humankind” (Genesis 5:1-2). The basis for the Golden Rule, in whatever form, is that every human being is the same, an avatar of the divine. We are all, every one of us, part of one family.

After Cain murdered his brother Abel, God asked him, “Where is your brother Abel?” Of course, we all remember Cain’s answer, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” God responds, “What have you done? Hark, your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground” (Genesis 4:9-10). The commentary on this found in the Talmud leads

*Continued next page*

*The basis of the Golden Rule is that every human being is an avatar of the divine.*

## Continued from page 6

to a well-known principle of Jewish ethics that follows this idea of the unity of humanity. The word translated as “blood” is actually in the plural form in the text.

For thus we find in the case of Cain, who killed his brother, that it is written: the *bloods* of your brother cry unto me: not the blood of your brother, but the bloods of thy brother, is said—i.e., his blood and the blood of his [potential] descendants. For this reason was man created alone, to teach you that whosoever destroys a single soul... scripture imputes [guilt] to him as though he had destroyed a complete world; and whosoever preserves a single soul... scripture ascribes [merit] to him as though he had preserved a complete world. Furthermore, [he was created alone] for the sake of peace among men, that one might not say to his fellow, ‘my ancestor was greater than yours, ...; again, to proclaim the greatness of the holy one of blessing: for if a man strikes many coins from one mould, they all resemble one another, but the supreme king of kings, the holy one of blessing, fashioned every person in the stamp of the first man, and yet not one of them resembles his fellow. Therefore every single person is obliged to say: the world was created for my sake. (SANH. 37a)

If we were all created the same in one mold or image, why is there so much diversity among human beings? That Biblical story is familiar—The Tower of Babel. After the Flood all of humanity was living in one place under one king. They all spoke one language. They got the idea of building a great tower to challenge Heaven. God looked and said, “If, as

one people with one language for all, this is how they have begun to act, then nothing that they propose to do will be out of their reach. Let us then go down and confound their speech there, so that they shall not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:5-7). This text raises many intriguing questions, but for us it is the story of why humanity is so culturally diverse despite all being of one kind.

Why would God do this? Why divide humanity in a way that causes us not to understand each other? Isn’t this the cause of wars, oppression, hatred, and injustice? It seems that we were not ready for a united humanity and are required to go through thousands of years of conflict. Does this make any sense at all? We find a wonderful answer in two passages from the Koran.

We have revealed the Book to you (Muhammad) in all Truth. It confirms the (original) Bible and has the authority to preserve or abrogate what the Bible contains. Judge among them by what God has revealed to you and do not follow their desires instead of the Truth which has come to you. We have given a law and a way of life to each of you. Had God wanted, He could have made you into one nation, but He wanted to see who are the more pious ones among you. Compete with each other in righteousness. All of you will return to God who will tell you the truth in the matter of your differences.” (5:48)

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.... (49:13)

Recently I reread one of Teilhard de Chardin’s books about his vision of a common human destiny. He saw us as on an evolutionary path towards what he called The Omega Point. This would be the culmination of Creation and, among other things, would bring all of humanity together as God intended. Pope Benedict XVI explained this vision beautifully:

And so we can now say that the goal of worship and the goal of creation as a whole are one and the same—divinization, a world of freedom and love. But this means that the historical makes its appearance in the cosmic. The cosmos is not a kind of closed building, a stationary container in which history may by chance take place. It is itself movement, from its one beginning to its one end. In a sense, creation is history. Against the background of the modern evolutionary world view, Teilhard de Chardin depicted the cosmos as a process of ascent, a series of unions. From very simple beginnings the path leads to ever greater and more complex unities, in which multiplicity is not abolished but merged into a growing synthesis, leading to the “Noosphere” in which spirit and its understanding embrace the whole and are blended into a kind of living organism.

Physics tells us that the universe is undergoing an inevitable process of increasing disorder in the universe called Entropy. What de Chardin, who was a scientist as well as a priest, taught was that human activity can reverse entropy itself. “This

will be the end and the fulfillment of the spirit of the Earth. The end of the world: the wholesale internal introversion upon

itself of the noosphere, which has simultaneously reached the uttermost limit of its complexity and centrality. The end of the world: the overthrow of equilibrium [the Heat Death], detaching the mind, fulfilled at last, from its material matrix, so that it will henceforth rest with all its weight on God-Omega.”

Our teacher A. J. Heschel put it this way. “For whom does he plant who plants a tree? For generations to come, for faces he has never seen. Higher purposes are shrewdly disguised as ends of immediate usefulness. It is as if divine cunning operated in human history, using our instincts as pretexts for the attainment of goals which are universally valid, a scheme to harness man’s lower forces in the service of higher ends.”

So where do we, you and I, fit into all of this? Each of us is so small in the scheme of things. It is essential that we go through our days encountering other people and recognizing them as being just like us, even though they are different. Every single person is a living avatar of god—that is what it means that we are made in the divine image. Some like to say, “we are in god’s hands.” I see that differently, as did and do so many of the spiritually great people we try to learn from. We are not in god’s hands—we are god’s hands.

In closing I want to share with you my favorite teaching on dialogue between people of differing opinions. It comes from Rabbi Menachem-Mendel of Kotzk and was taught to me in this form by my teacher Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (z”l).

If I am I because you are you

And

you are you because I am I

Then

I am not I and you are not you

But

If I am I because I am I

And

you are you because you are you

Then

I am I and you are you

[And we talk.]

May each of us be able to see in our human encounters the face of God.

## AFTERWARD

If anyone reading this wants to hear the original sermon from the conference, it is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNZ0Ga9N5YY&t=33s>. My sermon begins an hour into the recording and nothing much happens for the first forty minutes or so. However, I do recommend listening to the music of the resident musical group on the recording. They were very much the heart of our conference—Abraham Jam. They are three accomplished singer-songwriters, one from each of the Abrahamic faiths. You can find them on Youtube as well. Also on Youtube there are major addresses from our last three conferences.

If anyone reading this would like to know about our next conference, which will take place on November 21-24, 2019 at Lake Junaluska, the theme will be “Peace and The Arts.” There isn’t much posted on it yet, but go to [www.lakejunaluska.com/peace](http://www.lakejunaluska.com/peace) for information. ✧



Painting of “The Tower of Babel” from 1563 by Pieter Bruegel the Elder.