



Rumblings and Ruminations



Newsletter from Sharon Snir for January 2006

www.sharonsnir.com

On Thursday, October 20, 2005 three religious festivals, Ramadan, St. Francis Day and Sukkot crossed each others paths and were celebrated in a combined concert, aptly named, Rejoice, at the North Shore Temple Emmanuel. Included in the program were three story tellers each committed to community education and cultural reconciliation. Donna Jacobs Sife, Mehmet Seral and Reverend Grahame Ellis shared stories that touched and moved and inspired the Moslem, Christian and Jewish audience. If there was ever a moment where the possibility for joyful appreciation of each others differences and celebration of each others similarities could become a Global reality, it was that night.

For the first time since 1954 Christmas day and Hanukkah also came together in December 2005.

It seems to me the intersection of religious festivals in 2005 was perhaps an opportunity for us to examine our beliefs, values and attitudes towards 'others' in our environment.

The emotional explosions in Cronulla and Maroubra was also an intersection of cultures. The clashes that resulted were fuelled by a combination of beliefs and judgments often based on hearsay.

Dr. Sybil Perlmutter, *Consultant, Organisation Behaviour*, asks some poignant questions. "If you were to spend a few moment identifying the hot spots that come up on the nightly news or in the papers what would you come up with? Which ones capture your attention? (or with what do you most strongly identify?) Do you know how these hot spots came to be? What do you really know about the back-ground except for what you have heard or read over the last 12 months?"

Most of what is in the news has been there festering for a long time and is a result of poorly made decisions.

What kinds of questions do we need to ask of each other so that we can build connections rather than perpetuate conflicts? Right now the way we are educated keeps us steeped in a sense

of righteousness that inhibits us from asking questions and often prevents us from fully listening when we are spoken to.

In order to *listen* we need to create a state of receptivity in which we are interested in taking in what the other is saying. Have you noticed how people often plan their next sentence in their head even before the other has finished talking?

As long as we refrain from asking questions and refuse to listen to the other in an attempt to maintain our position, there can only be an intensifying of disconnectedness and an increase in more violent outbreaks.

Which leads me to **Gossip**.

Rabbi Irwin Katsof, author of, "Words Can Heal" says, "Quite simply the words you can say are the single biggest factor that determine your happiness in life."

Gossip is talking about someone who is not present. It often leads to rumour and rumours are hearsay. They are the inventions and interpretations of individuals and they become vehicles to support their positions. Gossip distracts us from asking valid questions.

If you didn't gossip what questions would you ask? If you think of statements you have made or contributed in a moment of gossip and then reframed them as a question, what might you discover?

Yesterday I was sharing with a friend my trip to Assisi and my life long love for St Francis. Suddenly from behind me her husband interrupted and added, "...and he was a rabid anti-Semite." I stopped in mid sentence and felt I had been hit from behind. I turned around and asked him to tell me how and what he knew about this. He said 'It is well known.' On further requests for an explanation I was told to look it up on the internet. That night I did, and after two hours of research found nothing to support this statement at all. We need to be responsible for what we say. We need to make statements based on fact rather than passion or hearsay.

My new years resolution? Resist listening to or participating in gossip, ask more questions, listen from the heart and respond from the mind.

What about you?

With Love and Blessings, Sharon