

The Passing of Shimon Peres: A Reflection

By Don Sutherland

On September 28, with the passing of [Shimon Peres](#), both the Jewish people and the world's entire human community lost a tireless warrior for peace. Although the terms "warrior" and "peace" are typically viewed in a contradictory light, their being joined represents a perspective that breaks out of the familiar boundaries of conventional thinking. Throughout his years in the service of Israel, Peres broke free of those frontiers. He was never fully content to accept the world that was. Instead, he imagined the better world that could be, and he strove passionately to bring that world into being.

He envisioned a world in which peace would become the default option. He sought a world in which the deeply-divided, war-scarred, long suffering Middle East would be able to "serve as a spiritual and cultural focal point for the entire world."

In his 1994 [Nobel Lecture](#), Peres expressed confidence that his pursuit was an attainable one. He pointed to the historical experience of the Jewish people as irrefutable evidence that people could, in fact, construct that better future. Relevant excerpts:

The sword, as the Bible teaches us, consumes flesh but it cannot provide sustenance. It is not rifles but people who triumph, and the conclusion from all the wars is that we need better people, not better rifles - to win wars, and mainly to avoid them...

Jewish history presents an encouraging lesson for mankind. For nearly four thousand years, a small nation carried a great message. Initially, the nation dwelt in its own land; later, it wandered in exile. This small nation swam against the tide and was repeatedly persecuted, banished, and down-trodden. There is no other example in all of history, neither among the great empires nor among their colonies and dependencies - of a nation, after so long a saga of tragedy and misfortune, rising up again, shaking itself free, gathering together its dispersed remnants, and setting out anew on its national adventure. Defeating doubters within and enemies without. Reviving its land and its language. Rebuilding its identity, and reaching toward new heights of distinction and excellence.

The message of the Jewish people to mankind is that faith and moral vision can triumph over all adversity.

This Rosh Hashanah presents an opportune time for good people everywhere to reflect on Peres' considerable achievements, his courageous pursuits, and his unwavering faith that people could "triumph over all adversity."

Perhaps the inspiration of the statesman and his dream of a better world will inspire the human community to renew its efforts in creating that better world. Even if the current generation manages only a few steps toward that vision, it would make a significant investment in building that better future.