

*Remarks shared by Anne Schaffer, Director,
AJC Belfer Center for American Pluralism*

Peace...iri'ni...paz...paqe...asalaam alaikum...shalom aleichem...

On behalf of AJC, let me express our appreciation that we can join with you, Rabbi Schneier, Rabbi Leerfield, Cantor Rogosnitzky, and with your community, on this Shabbat, in this sanctuary of peace.

I want to acknowledge Barbara Reiss, president of the New York Region of AJC, Michael Schmidt, its director, and many members who are with us this morning.

Rev. Father Avery, Rev. Henderson, and Imam Kukiqi: you honor us with your presence and your participation.

A warm welcome to those of you who are here and who represent the marvelously diverse religious and ethnic mosaic of New York. I want to extend a particular word of greeting and welcome to our many friends in the Albanian American community who have joined us—as together we mark this sacred day of memory, the tenth anniversary of 9/11.

For 105 years AJC has understood that the security and well-being of each community is connected with the security and wellbeing of all communities, and to the bridges of mutual understanding and respect that we build between us.

Bridge-building is, in fact, the essence of our work at AJC—and your presence here strengthens the trusses, the underpinnings, of those bridges.

We gather today to mark and respond to the terror that rained down on our people, our buildings, our sense of security and our national psyche that bright blue-skyed day ten years ago.

We do so in two ways—by remembrance and by renewal. How fitting that we do so here on Shabbat, the Sabbath, which we are commanded to remember, zachor, and observe, shamor. We commemorate our freedom from slavery, and we reflect on God's act of creation.

Today, recalling a horrific act of destruction ten years ago, we re-assert our individual and collective obligation to act in God's image—to be instruments of God's creation. Here...and now.

We remember the innocent people who died; we recall the heroism of those who tried to save them; we bring comfort to the many among us who have lost those who were near and dear to them.

And we also re-live the act of creation each Shabbat, and the possibilities for rebuilding that are within each of us and within all of us collectively.

We renew ourselves by expressing our gratitude for the blessings of our lives.

We rebuild our nation by affirming the humanity of every one of us, all created in the image of God.

And, finally, we recommit ourselves to peace by understanding that it is within ourselves to do so.

Please join me in reading an abbreviated version of a poem by Rabbi Jack Riemer on the last page of *A Time to Remember*, who expresses this obligation with such clarity:

We cannot merely pray to God to end war;
For the world was made in such a way
That we must find our own path of peace
Within ourselves and with our neighbor...
Therefore we pray instead
For strength, determination, and willpower,
To do instead of merely to pray
To become instead of merely to wish;
That our world may be safe,
And that our lives may be blessed.

Thank you.