

Out of the Strong Comes Something Sweet

Several years ago, the congregation I was serving hosted a presentation by “Combatants for Peace”, an organization working for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Through Combatants for Peace, teams, former Israeli soldiers and former Palestinian freedom fighters offer their own experiences of violence and hopes for peace.

After the presentation, I was talking to Yaniv, the former Israeli soldier who spoke that night. I asked him about the work of Combatants for Peace. He said this was his first speaking tour outside Israel and he was only able to come at the last minute because he had been laid off from his job. When I expressed regret that he had lost his job he said, “No, no, from something strong comes something sweet.”

The line is a reference to the biblical story of Samson who kills a strong lion and later finds a swarm of bees and their sweet honey in the carcass. Yaniv was talking about the fact of losing his job as an opportunity to be on this trip, but it seemed to me an apt expression of the work everyone involved in that evening was doing. Out of the loss of her husband on September 11, the woman organizing the tour came to work with Combatants for Peace. Out of his experience in Israeli jails Bassam, the Palestinian freedom fighter who spoke that evening, came to work for understanding and dialogue. Out of his years as part of the occupying Israeli army in Lebanon and Gaza Yaniv came to work for a peaceful solution. Out of the strong came something sweet. Not just a turn from strength of power to the sweetness of peace, but, as we heard them say, a turn to the understanding that peace is more powerful than violence, and that to create peace requires more strength than to perpetuate violence.