

**December 24, 2009**  
**Shabbat Shalom!**

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*The Torah portion for this week begins with one of the most touching and poignant scenes in the entire Bible. Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers, after letting them know that he, Pharaoh's second-in-command, was, in fact, their brother, is almost a surprise. We might have expected Joseph to use that pivotal moment to exact vengeance on the very family members who tried to erase his existence in their lives. That is probably what his brothers thought would happen. Instead, Joseph declared to them that it was not they who sent him to Egypt, but God, in order that he would be in a position to provide food for his family and for all of Egypt through his wisdom and ingenuity. He had the insight to recognize the higher purpose of his moment with his brothers, and made the sacred and godly choice of engendering a new sense of unity within his family.*

*In relations between countries, in negotiations between legislators to create laws and policies for the people they serve, within families, and of course, within congregations, reconciliation is a goal and, when it happens, a gift that brings unity and peace right along with it. It does not mean that conflict and disagreement will disappear, but realizing what holds us together has the potential to sustain the lines of communication long enough to lead us at least to compromise, if not general agreement. As people around the world focus on the values of peace on earth and bringing light at this dark time of year, may we extend that hope of unity to all that we say and do, every day of our lives!*

**-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry**