

# **February 12, 2010**

## **Shabbat Shalom!**

***"You must not carry false rumors... Keep far from a false charge."***

*Both of these statements from Exodus in this week's Torah portion, Mishpatim, direct us to be honest and accurate in our communication. Our words and actions, even ones that seem crystal clear, have a possibility of being misinterpreted. When I have offered comments to news reporters over the years, I have always hoped that the quote I gave would be put in a proper context. In speaking with a friend, family member, congregant, or community member, I try to be sure that I am using my words in such a way as to convey the desired intent. That is why I take great care with the words I write, and hope that, if I have made an incorrect word choice, I (or a proofreader) will catch it before I send it out!*

*I know that we all deal with these issues daily. We hear people make claims and tell stories about others that we don't necessarily know are true. Judaism teaches us, when it comes to gossip, not to listen to it and, if we can't refrain from listening to it, don't repeat it! When words we hear are hurtful or when false accusations are made in a public way, there may be no way to take them back. The Torah is telling us this week to be careful with what we say, to dissociate ourselves from statements that are inaccurate and dishonest and from the people who made those claims, and to do all that we can to speak well of others and to find, and appeal to, the best of their character and soul. In a world where words are often used as weapons, may we try to use what we say, and do, for healing, fellowship and hope.*

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