

**February 8, 2008**

*Dear Friends,*

*It was reported on the news this week that the Vatican has changed the language of the “prayer for the Jews” offered on Good Friday. The previous version of the prayer spoke of the blindness of Jews in not accepting Jesus as a savior and it asked that the veil be removed from the hearts of Jews.*

*The central language of the revised prayer that can be offered in Catholic churches, especially those holding services using the old Latin or Tridentine rite, reads as follows: “Let us pray for the Jews. May the Lord our God illuminate their hearts so that they may recognize Jesus Christ savior of all men. . . . Almighty and everlasting God, you who want all men to be saved and to gain knowledge of the truth, kindly allow that, as all peoples enter into your Church, all of Israel be saved.”*

*Most Jewish leaders were not surprised at this wording. Pope Benedict XVI has been leading a move towards tradition that takes Catholicism to a different place regarding relations with people of other faiths as compared to the approach of Pope John Paul II and the changes suggested by the Second Vatican Council over 40 years ago.*

*The Torah portion for this week, TERUMAH, recounts instructions given to the Israelites to make donations of raw materials for the construction of the Tabernacle, their center of worship. The people were to give “as their hearts so moved them.” Judaism teaches that salvation can be achieved by being a good and righteous person. According to a statement from rabbinic literature, “The righteous of all nations will have a share in the world to come (the Jewish vision of an idealized future).” People of every faith, background and origin and individuals from all walks of life can significantly contribute to the collective righteousness of the human family. Reform Judaism teaches that any “circle of salvation” is meant to be open to all whose hearts move them to goodness, kindness and peace.*

*Every religion is, of course, entitled to its own views. We, as a community and a congregation, can continue to keep our doors, our minds and our hearts open to the ways in which all people can enhance the well-being of humanity and our world. Shabbat Shalom!*

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

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**February 1, 2008**

*Dear Friends,*

*Our discussion series “Letting God In: What Do We Believe?” has given participants an opportunity to engage in lively discussion about how our perspectives on God change over the course of our lives and how we view God in terms of our personal experiences. In the new book *A Touch of the Sacred: A Theologian’s Informal Guide to Jewish Belief* (by Eugene Borowitz and Frances Schwartz), the first chapter presents the dilemma that we may have in such a discussion or even in fashioning a personal God concept: that we can’t talk about God, because nothing we could express would come close to expressing what God is, but that we **MUST** talk about God because we human beings are driven to express what we feel and believe. Asking children or adults to draw a picture of the wind or of love leads them to realize that they can depict the effects of wind or the effects of a loving relationship, but that it is not possible to portray the actual “wind” or “love.” Still, we know that the intangible aspects of life are worth discussing because they are often more real than what is tangible.*

*We know that the “effects of God” do not always lead people to positive and loving action. I would agree with anyone who would point out that much violence has been done in the name of God. In those cases, the violence is usually perpetrated in the name of a particular group of believers. I marvel at the Jewish, Muslim and Christian spiritual leaders who regularly meet in Jerusalem (sponsored by the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel—[icci.org.il](http://icci.org.il)) no matter what is happening on the political scene, even in times of heightened conflict. Such dialogues are, in my view, a true reflection of what many faiths would hope to convey about God’s presence in human life. It is like the verses in the Torah portion for the week of February 1, Mishpatim, which notes that God hears the cry and shows compassion to the most vulnerable members of society (especially those in poverty). The Torah teaches that, to be like God, we should be kind and generous and show compassion to people in need, well beyond what might be offered in packages of legislation or social programs intended to offer every member of society a chance to subsist and thrive. When we internalize and act upon that teaching about compassion and kindness, we are, from a Jewish perspective, demonstrating an “effect of God” that can lead humanity to a greater unity that better reflects the unity of God.*

*Prayer, study, action, and maintaining relationships are based on consideration for the well-being of community members—these are ways that God can enter our lives. May we continue to be open to God’s presence so that we can find our way, together, to hope and peace.*

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