

January 30, 2009

**Reflections on the arrival of the new prayerbook
created by the Central Conference of American
Rabbis *Mishkan T'filah***

Joining our voices together in words, in song, experiencing moments of silence as both communal and personal... These are a part of the essence of our worship. Some words find their way into our minds, others into our hearts, all of them created either by ancient sages or by individuals whose spiritual overflow echoed the very thoughts and emotions of their fellow human beings. The Siddur, the traditional prayerbook, has a title that means "order," a progression of themes that repeats from one service to the next so we will consider our views on how we can best treat creation and all people with respect, how gaining new knowledge can lead us to work for freedom and peace and how being grateful for our very lives can enable us to appreciate that all that we have is a gift. "Mishkan" means Tabernacle, the ancient site of Israelite worship. Yet, it also means "dwelling place," a home where we can find what is godly and unique in ourselves and in others. "T'filah" means "prayer," but its root word means to intercede, to mediate, and even...to judge. "Mishkan T'filah" can mean a dwelling place, a home, where we can take a hard look at ourselves with the support of a compassionate and understanding community, people who are also seeking a home with warmth and meaning that offers a sense of peace and hope. As we pray from this new Siddur, may its progression and presentation of words and thoughts, ancient and modern, inspire us to find the best of ourselves in the wisdom and spirit that the Jewish people has accumulated over the ages, to which each of us will add something new.

L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.