

July 17, 2009

Shabbat Shalom from Crane Lake Camp!

One of the aspects of my annual service on the faculty of the Union for Reform Judaism's Crane Lake Camp in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts is that every day is an adventure unto itself! There are triumphs and challenges that I can see for myself in my own teaching and interactions with the campers, and I see the campers going through their own version of that experience as they live in this community with peers, counselors and other staff who are here to help them get the most out of being here. We may look at our "normal routines" at home, at school or at work in the same way – we might not divide our time by individual days, but we might come to see each week as a journey, where the weekend and Shabbat offer a well-deserved destination for rest.

The Torah reading for this week, Matot-Mas'ei, features Moses' recounting of the Israelites' journeys from Egypt to the boundary of Canaan, the land that they were poised to enter. Moses could have recalled the wanderings of the people by saying, "We set out from location A, went to location B, then C, and then D." Or he could have only said, "Our journey began in Rameses in Egypt and ended "in the steppes of Moab, at the Jordan near Jericho." Yet, instead of listing just the separate destinations or only the final one, Moses' repeated the starting points and the places where the Israelites set up camp. He said, "The Israelites set out from point A and encamped at point B. They set out from point B and encamped at point C." Every starting point and every place of encampment had equal importance. No spot – or event - along the journey was insignificant. All of those places – and experiences – combined to form the totality of the Israelite journey from Egypt to Canaan.

All of our experiences, day-by-day or week-by-week, combine to form the story of our life's journey. Every moment has the potential to add something special and significant to our own personal itinerary and narrative, helping us to discover who we are and who we can be. May the lessons we learn from the moments of our lives guide us on a path that will bring us hope, promise, and blessing.

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.