

July 25, 2008

Shabbat Shalom!

Senator Barack Obama's trip to Europe and the Middle East and reactions from Senator John McCain and the media have raised the issue of what the future holds in store for international politics and relationships between countries after this year's election. Voters will decide who will best defend security while fostering an atmosphere in which peace can flourish (if it has a chance!). Americans will attempt to identify the candidate that best fits their own vision for the world, a perspective that may include an approach that would hold hostile leaders and nations at bay and/or policies that will engender hope and greater prosperity for the generations to come.

In the Haftarah reading for this week, the prophet Jeremiah received his call to offer, in his own words, a divine view of the future in his time. His mission, as recorded in Jeremiah Chapter 1, was ominous: "See, I (God) have called you this day to speak to nations and kingdoms, to uproot, to pull down, to destroy, to root out, but also to build and to plant." Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians, something he had known would happen due to a lack of insight among the king of Judah and his advisors. What has always stayed with me is that Jeremiah's realistic outlook on world affairs (which led him to see early on that Judah would be conquered by the Babylonians) was balanced with a message of hope. There would be a time when his people would build and plant once again, albeit not in his lifetime. One reason the book of Jeremiah has survived is that he was correct: many of the people would return from Babylonian exile and rebuild the Temple and their society.

We ourselves may not be prophets, but it is likely that we can ascertain which of our leaders have the keenest ability to turn from "pulling down" to "building," from "rooting out" to "planting." Perhaps Jeremiah's call to be a prophet and his own vision of hope can guide us as we try to do what we can to move our nation and the world towards the peace we crave for all humanity.

**-- L'shalom,
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