

**June 11, 2009**

**Shabbat Shalom!**

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*I began the "Judaism 201: An Explorer's Guide" study session this past Tuesday night - and last night Board's meeting - with this saying from the Talmud:*

*"A favorite saying of the rabbis of Yavneh was: I am a creature of God and my neighbor is a creature of God. I work in the city and he works in the country. I rise early for my work and he rises early for his work. Just as he cannot excel in my work, I cannot excel in his work. Will you say that I do great things and he does small things? We have learned that it does not matter whether a person does much or little, as long as he directs his heart to heaven."*

*Directing one's heart to heaven in this statement can mean that we should rise above differences between people of different backgrounds and see the significant contribution that every person can make in the world. It does not mean acting in a way that hurts others, claiming that justification for the act came from God. The shooting at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum yesterday offers a sober reminder of narrow ideologies that lead people away from the goals of acceptance and equality in the human family. Voices of reason should still rise above such violent acts, encouraging dialogue that can bring people, even those who disagree, closer to each other.*

*The Torah reading for this week envisioned a pillar of cloud that led (and protected) the Israelites by day and a pillar of fire that accompanied them at night. Through our continued attempts to truly understand and get to know one another - in our congregation, in our community, throughout the world - we can be our own pillar of fire and cloud for one another, directing our hearts and minds to rise above possible conflict and see the touch of humanity - and even divinity - in each other. May we be, for each other, such a source of guidance, security, and peace.*

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