

June 11, 2010

Shabbat Shalom!

We are dedicating our new Tree of Life at our Shabbat Service on June 11 (tonight) in memory of Lorraine Goren, who tirelessly worked for our congregation and community. Already, several Temple families have chosen to add a leaf to the tree to mark special milestones in life, knowing that there may be other landmark events to come that will also find their way onto the tree. This is one way to note that certain times and moments in life are special and even sacred (KADOSH).

In the Torah portion for this week, Korach, possibly a relative of Moses and Aaron, challenged the authority of the Israelite leaders by claiming that, if all the Israelites were holy, how could Moses and Aaron put themselves above everyone else? We know that true leadership carries with it responsibility and requires an ability to adapt and change. Torah commentator Yeshayahu Leibowitz saw Korach's assertion about the holiness of the Israelites to mean that "we have achieved our goal and nothing more need be demanded of us" to be holy. It was as if he was saying, and even boasting, "I am already holy and don't need to change." Yet, what the Torah actually says (based on from Leviticus Chapter 19, which includes the phrase, "Love your neighbor as yourself) is "BE HOLY, for I, the Eternal your God, am holy." Holiness is about becoming, not being – it is a goal, not a present state. Leaders and people like Korach think they have nothing to learn from anyone or any new experience. Leaders and people like Moses and Aaron see their own imperfections, lament the need to stand firm in the face of overwhelming opposition, and are willing to learn something new to move along the road towards greater effectiveness and even holiness.

Every milestone in life gives us a new opportunity to take note of who we are and where we are at any given moment, and where we want to be in the future. Marking a special occasion in any way makes that moment KADOSH, sacred, reminding us that embodied in our celebrations is an admission that we can continue to learn and grow along our life's journey. May we continue together on this path of "becoming" in unity and hope!

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry