

June 29, 2008

Dear Friends,

In the Haftarah from this past week, the prophet Samuel was concerned that the people wanted to have a king, like all the other nations around them. Samuel thought that it was enough that a human prophet or a judge, inspired by divine teachings, would lead the Israelites in their new home. Samuel had seen that too many kings of other nations had shown that they thought only of themselves, not of their people. The prophet told the people that if they and their King, together, practiced godliness – that is, goodness, truth, healing, giving and hope - then all would be well with them. Samuel's concerns were, unfortunately, warranted. There were, according to Israelite history, some kings who did well, but others who thought only of themselves and believed themselves to be above the law. Samuel was telling his people that, when it came to being ruled by a king, "Be careful what you wish for – you might get it!" Yet, he also had faith that the people themselves would be able to preserve the best values of the nation and their community even if their leaders didn't.

This is not unlike the struggle that goes on in nations around the world today. Citizens of many countries are involved in their own attempts to make all voices and opinions heard, even in the face of a thirst for absolute control by government leaders.

What is most important for us is that we realize that we do play a significant role in community life. It is not agreement on all issues that is required of us in our own state and nation, but, rather, a sense that our democracy and our freedom and worth preserving. By sharing our ideas and commitment through participation in election campaigns and public discussions, we will continue to create a positive community that cares deeply about the well-being and the future of our country and our world.

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