

March 13, 2008

Recent events regarding public figures have demonstrated the necessity that our relationships, whether in families or a greater community, be based upon truly living and expressing what we believe while taking into account the possible consequences of our views and actions. Prominent members – official and honorary – of presidential campaigns have stepped down due to disparaging comments made in a war of words that will likely continue, but one that, according to voters (not just “pundits”), should have some parameters and rules. One public figure, due to his own lack of judgment (and, some say, a disconnect with his own emotions), failed to realize that even he was subject to the very laws that he relentlessly pursued when applying them to the actions of others. In one of these cases, the apology may not reach far enough to heal the hurts that have been caused. In the others, it is likely that the views expressed with harsh rhetoric still persist even after the individuals were dismissed from their roles of support and counsel.

The Torah portion for this week (at the beginning book of Leviticus) outlines specifics on how sacrifices were to be carried out so that the Israelites could make right, on some level, what they had done wrong, whether their act was intentional or inadvertent. The prophet Isaiah lamented in the Haftarah reading that the people came to see any ritual, pronouncement of apology or admission of even minor guilt as a burden. They abandoned such practices in favor of worshipping the popular idols of their neighbors that, they thought, would bring them material gain. Isaiah implored his peers to recognize that the rituals they had inherited would lead them to spiritual growth that would ultimately be more enriching than the promise of status, power and possessions.

As we watch leaders in the public eye, and relate to the people who are part of our families and communities, may we continue to strive to exemplify and emulate the traits of integrity, respect, sincerity and genuineness in all that we do. Shabbat Shalom!

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