

**October 23, 2009**

**Shabbat Shalom!**

---

*Of all years, this one seemed to me to bear an even greater urgency for getting a seasonal flu vaccination. When I found out that my primary care physician's office had no vaccine left for now, I took it upon myself to find somewhere nearby (even within 100 miles!) that had flu vaccinations available. After some exploration and checking, I was told that I could make my way to Care Pharmacy in Rochester this week for a Rochester Visiting Nurses Association morning clinic. I arrived 10 minutes before the clinic began to find a long line that, I thought, might take 2 hours. It didn't take that long (20 minutes), but it was fascinating to see how many people had come out, creating our own microcosm of community in line as we waited for our turn. Once I got near the front, I asked the nurse how she was doing that day (I wanted to be sure to acknowledge her as a member of this short-lived community!). It was actually a peaceful experience that offered a brief connection to people I might not have otherwise met.*

*As I thought about the Torah portion for the week, featuring Noah answering God's call to build an ark for the coming flood, I thought about the clinic, and perhaps, each of us in line, as being like Noah in some way. Noah's ark offered a small group of people and many animals protection from the coming flood and storms. The flu vaccination offers protection from some of invisible and subtle health challenges that surround us. I also thought about our health care/health insurance system offering us assurance and hope. Unfortunately, if our health care system is like Noah's ark, not everyone is on the ark, and even some people on the ark aren't well protected from "floods and storms" that might come their way. Getting a flu vaccination helps each person and promotes health among members of a community. Providing health insurance to all, in whatever way we can, also offers benefit not only each individual or family, but all people in a community or nation. The ark was a place where a remnant of humanity, Noah's family, was saved because Noah was "righteous in his time." Hopefully, we believe that everyone deserves to have the support, protection and peace of mind that comes from the availability and affordability of good health care.*

*Health care providers, the insurance industry, concerned citizens and legislators are working out the details of what our health insurance "ark" might look like. There are many possible solutions, most of them very costly, but all of them worthy of consideration due to the sense that change is necessary. Let us hope that, when the process is complete, everyone will have a some semblance of a "safe place" on the "ark" that will offer them health and well-being.*

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