

September 25, 2009

Shabbat Shalom and Gamru Chatimah Tovah - May you finish these High Holy Days sealed for a good New Year!

When I went to fill up the gas tank in my very thirsty (yet economical!) Toyota Matrix last night, the last thing I expected was a political discussion with the man behind the counter at the Shell station. Yet, that is just what I got, and it was intriguing. As this man looked at the cover of his copy of USA Today, he was going on about Muammar al-Gaddafi's address to the United Nations, saying that it was a bitter rehashing of the past that included not even a glimmer of hope for a change of heart or policy. I remarked that the same could be said of Mahmoud Ahmedinijad. Both of those leaders seem to constantly need to reiterate their power and defiance. Contrast their declarations to the coordinated announcement by President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy at the G20 conference in Pittsburgh this morning. They presented a firm and united call for full disclosure of the progress and purposes of the Iranian nuclear development program, rules by which other nations must abide. There is still a desire for discussion and engagement with Iran in that united front, but we are left to wonder how soon it will materialize.

There are times when we need to move beyond narrow concerns to a more global perspective. In the Torah reading for this week in Deuteronomy Chapter 32, Moses expressed his vision for the people in the form of a song. The content of the "Song of Moses" focused on the need for the people to follow God's direction (which they didn't at times) and to realize that respect for divine teachings and acknowledging God's unity and the oneness of humanity must be central to their lives in a way that can bring all people closer together.

There were many songs that were sung at the United Nations this week, and not all of them in harmony. May the dissonance that still persists among the nations give way to a more melodious chorus of voices from around the world, as we realize that, more than ever, we are all in this together and there is still a chance for more understanding and, perhaps, peace.

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.

September 16, 2009
Shanah Tovah!

We will begin the new year for us, here and now, this week. As we do, we remember our ancestors who worshipped and lived in other lands, and who then found their way to these shores to add a new chapter to their family story.

The Torah envisioned people of all ages and all walks of life standing together before Moses (in words we will read on Yom Kippur morning) as one community, ready to hear teachings that would direct their hearts toward goodness and their actions toward kindness. We will stand together in just this way on these High Holy Days.

It is our time, now, to join as a congregation and community for worship, for unity, for contemplation about how we can bring out the best in ourselves and in each other and touch the human family with the gifts of our minds and hearts. May this year of 5770 be one filled with blessing and peace for all of us!

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.

September 2, 2009
Shabbat Shalom!

A Nearly Complete Alphabet of Blessings for 5770

We wish you a year filled with...

- **Acceptance:**
for people and ideas.
- **Bravery:**
to face life's challenges.
- **Compassion:**
for those who need our concern.
- **Devotion:**
to our families and/or community and the tasks that are important to us.
- **Empathy:**
towards the situations in which others find themselves so that we can be moved to action.
- **Forgiveness:**
of others and ourselves so we can move forward.
- **Growth:**
in ways we may not even imagine we could change.
- **Humility:**
that will remind us of our limits as well as our capabilities.
- **Inspiration:**
to soar to new heights.
- **Justice:**
that brings balance between people in communities and nations.
- **Kindness:**
which can serve as the basis for all we do.
- **Love:**
within families, among friends, for humanity, for all creation.
- **Mercy:**
that gives others – and ourselves- a chance to right a wrong.
- **Newness:**
which will make this year different from every other year.
- **Opportunity:**
for work, adventure, exploration and personal quests.
- **Peace:**
within ourselves and around the world

- **Quiet:**
to feel a sense of Shabbat within us and around us.
- **Renewal:**
for our bodies and our souls.
- **Strength:**
to live day to day.
- **Thankfulness:**
for the gifts we have been given.
- **Understanding:**
that can bring people with different viewpoints and beliefs together.
- **Vitality:**
that keeps us active in every moment.
- **Wonder:**
at the daily miracles that we may not even notice.
- **Yearning:**
that leads us always to strive to improve ourselves and our world.
- **Zestfulness:** *to live with enthusiasm and spirit!*

From our home to yours, we wish you a happy and healthy 5770!

-- Rabbi Larry, Rhonda and Adam Karol