

Cantorial Message

May 2019

On May 10, I will be chanting from Parashat Kedoshim, in memory of Terri Goldsmith. It was her Bat Mitzvah Parsha and she had planned to chant it this year. I think this Torah portion was perfect for her, because it contains the well-known commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” Lev. 19:18. Terri was always taking care of people, especially me. She always jumped in to give you exactly what you needed, to help you out in a tough time, or just a little something to make you smile, like a vegan cupcake!

Lev. 19:18 is a fundamental statement in many religions, though ours may be the oldest written version. Our Torah Commentary quotes many great thinkers, my favorite being from Hermann Cohen and Martin Buber. They said “Be loving to your fellow man, as to one who is just like you.” Could it be that what makes my neighbor just like me is that he or she contains the same spark within them that I have within myself? That spark of G*d that is contained in every man, woman, and child? Are we not all part of the One? I find that very interesting!

Nachmanides said that we should free ourselves from jealousy and rejoice in our neighbor’s good fortune. There is something to be said for rejoicing, showing great happiness, for someone other than ourselves who is blessed with good fortune. Great happiness is an extremely positive feeling, whereas jealousy is an extremely negative feeling that can certainly cause hate and discontent for your neighbor and for yourself.

We are made in the image of G*d, and Parashat Kedoshim is about striving to be holy like our Creator. What I gleaned from this portion is that we should treat one another with kindness, love, and respect. If we could set aside hate and jealousy and choose to take a step toward the holy, and at the very least, respect those around us, what a different world this would be. Bernard Bamberger writes in our Torah Commentary Book, “The idea of holiness implies that what we do and what we make of our lives matters not only to us as individuals, not only to society, but to the entire cosmos. A divine purpose runs through our existence.”

My friend, our friend, Terri, through her caring about others, did live her life with a divine purpose. May her life inspire us to make our lives matter to those around us.

Thank you to our May Torah readers: Ari, Ezra, and David Rosenberg, and Regina Magnus-Aryitey

Interested in leading a Shabbat Service on a Friday evening in July or August? Now is the time to think about it. Please let me know as soon as you can, because the dates tend to fill up fast.

B’shir,
Sherry