



July 2024 D'Var Torah

Dear Friends,

I am thinking of the title of a novel by William Faulkner, *The Long Hot Summer*, this time of year and not only because of the recent heat wave that we experienced! That image resonates with me both because of the chapters of the Torah that we are currently reading and because of the tough times that both the United States and Israel – and indeed many democracies throughout the world – seem to be enduring.

In the Torah we are reading at Sabbath services during the summer the Book of Numbers (literally, “In the Wilderness”) that describes the forty year exodus of our ancestors from slavery to freedom going from Egypt to the Promised Land of Israel. But before you can take the slaves out of Egypt you have to take the Egypt (i.e., the slave mentality) out of Israel. Indeed the forty year process is decreed precisely because the people are so fearful of change and the responsibility that comes from freedom. A new generation must emerge that can meet and face the many challenges ahead. We can see the exodus then, not just as a physical migration but also as a spiritual and psychological journey and transformation.

Just as the people grumble and complain through much of the Book of Numbers, so too there is much dissatisfaction and discontent throughout so much of the world as many democracies face elections. Democracy is messy and fragile; as Winston Churchill once declared, it is the worst form of government except for all the rest. And we know about all the challenges and problems both here and abroad instantly with immediate and constant access to social media and all forms of technology.

May the recent observances of Independence Day and the 80th anniversary of D-Day inspire us as we remember what America and the Free World could achieve and may they rekindle in all of us a re-dedication to our sacred work here at Mozaic Senior Life. And may we all have the chance to relax this summer and refresh ourselves to be strengthened in order to face the challenges ahead.

Thank you,

Rabbi Stephen Shulman,
Pastoral Services