

Greetings:

1956

Thanksgiving and Hanukah come close together this year. Similar, too. The first is our national celebration for the survival of the Pilgrims in the new land. We observe it by consuming prodigious quantities of turkey and fixings. After many perils, they set up a society based on hope and freedom from oppression. The second is for the survival of the Maccabees in the ancient land, in a period long before the establishment of Christianity and Mohammedanism. Their struggle was full of peril too, to rid their society of oppression. The struggle continues today. In recent events, the racism resolution in the UN, the mad arms race. Will it ever end? And is the peril less?

Oct 23rd - the death of my brother, Harry. We had called him Hack since our childhood. We were proud when he graduated Law School. Altho he was never happy in that profession with its controversy and conniving, and soon left it. A quiet man, he sought to minimize conflict in his life, not to harm others and to shield his little family from the harsh world. A difficult task. I flew east to join our four sisters as we accompanied him to his grave. Burial alongside our parents in the cemetery plot provided by our father years before. What a congested place a Jewish cemetery on Long Island is on Sunday mornings. Funerals, unveilings, visits by mourners. Devotion, remembrance, and piety impinged on by commercialism and crassness. We were grateful for many kindnesses in this period of grief for us, Betty the widow, and daughter Janie whom he had led to the altar only a little over a year ago for her marriage to Bernard. Simcha - sorrow. Such are the lessons of life. Do we learn from them?

Back in Tucson, we have organized a Study Seminar in memory of Sema Schneck for her devotion to the study of Jewish history and literature. Once, when she introduced me for a talk to her class, she called me a Lamed Vuvnik. Very high praise, and I was not worthy of it. The term is from an ancient belief that the world is sustained by 36 just men. Humble, with no distinguishing features, unknown to each other, they pursue the cause of justice for all men. It is difficult to name even one or two men deserving of this appellation. Who - presidents, prelates, who? Maybe William O. Douglas for one. Perhaps, Abraham Joshua Heschel, but he is gone. Cesar Chavez? Which names would you suggest?

Our Study Seminar uses as its text the Five Books of Moses - Pentateuch - Chumash. We meet each Tuesday morning for two hours. We read the week's sedrah in English, the same as is read in Hebrew on the Sabbath. All have turns in the reading as is done with the aliyahs in the synagogue. After each portion, we discuss it. Most enlightening for the wisdom and instruction we glean. It is remarkable how relevant the ancient text is to this very period and to our own lives. How stimulating and the time flies by.

A bit about our granddaughter, Sarah. She passed her sixth birthday on July 31 and is now a first grader at the Wheeler School. Does she like school? Hard to tell. Even her mother, Marian, is not sure altho she enjoys drawing and math. She eats her daily school lunches, except on Friday when they usually have fish sticks. Sarah prefers tacos. On Friday evenings, she is our overnight guest and Gma Frances goes all out for these visits. When I render the Sabbath "kiddush", she watches, has learned a few words, and gives a hearty "uh-mayn" when so inclined. Saturday mornings, she joins us and some friends and neighbors on our weekly hikes on nearby desert trails. She can keep up with us - and takes an active interest in the features of the terrain.

Thanks for reading this far in this personal recital. Some of you asked for such items. Perhaps later on, I will include news of Elliot and Polly, and their boys Gabe and Elia, who are now back in Texas.

--- Joseph Zashin