Bein Kodesh L'chol

†I know just enough about Opera music to embarrass myself when talking to somebody who knows anything about Opera music. The same can be said for my knowledge of home repair and cooking. I know just enough about each subject to think I know more about each than I actually do.

Truth be told I know quite a lot about the Civil War and the art of modern warfare, but most of the knowledge I am most proud of most people who would want to talk about such things already know just as well as I do.

I have seen Peter, Paul and Mary in concert over 100 times, James Taylor nearly twice that. I once spent 9 days in an intensive study and examination of the American Civil War, and followed that experience with similar studies of Baseball and New York city on almost a yearly basis. I live in Mr. Roger's neighborhood, and he is my very best friend.

Everything I know I learned from Public Television. In truth, I learn a lot as a Rabbinical Student as well, but the most varied educational experience of my life has come from watching Television. Not the 'Must See TV' variety though I watch plenty of that as well, and let me just say, if you don't watch 'West Wing' you really should. But the TV I learn the most from is the Public kind and I never cease to amaze myself with the kind of things I now know.

Did you know that the first Tanks ever used in warfare could not turn or reverse? Did you know that it took science 70 years to figure out how to determine longitude at sea? The handshake first came into use as a method for determining if the approaching person was carrying a gun. I can't tell you much more about any of these

things, but I can tell you that I learned them all from Public Television. How do you move troops across a battlefield, build a Tank. How do you chart your course while at sea, develop a clock that keeps perfect time. How do you make sure the person you greet doesn't shoot you, in an age where it takes two hands to load and fire a gun, grasp a firm hold of one of those hands and shake it vigorously.

Tonight we have heard an entire Shabbat Service set beautifully and majestically to Opera music. For those who were wondering, yes it was Opera music, I can say that with authority, I saw a concert on PBS last week. The artistic blending of melody and instrument with the traditional words of the Shabbat liturgy, goes back as far as biblical times, when the Levities in the Temple Choir of the First Temple in Jerusalem would set King David's psalm's to music. Doing so gave a true voice to David's writings and inspirational words, that were locked away on a printed page for only a few to read. This is of course because the printing press was not invented until 15th Century, another little fact I learned from PBS. But more to the point music then allowed people to appreciate Judaism on an intensely personal and intimate level, and music today allows us to do the same and more. Not only have Tova and the Choir enlivened our liturgy tonight, as Cantor Glasser and Tova do every Friday night, but this Friday as the choir sang forth with Operatic bravado, they have done something greater still. They have connected the art and culture of Jewish worship, with the art and culture of the western world. They have formed a bridge, a gesher between what we often wrongly refer to as the sacred and the profane, that which is Jewish and that which is not.

Things can be sacred and not be Jewish, they can be holy and not be written in Hebrew, songs and melodies can evoke great emotion and reflection and have nothing

to do with God or religion. Not everything that is worth knowing in life has to be Jewish, for that matter not everything Jewish is worth knowing, trust me I know.

I don't think that I need to convince any of you of the value of a diverse and rich education, but what I do want to point out is that we can appreciate Judaism more, when we know more about life and the world in general. When we can hear the words of the liturgy through the settings of the great musical masters, when we see the cycles of Jewish history as part of the larger history of the world. When we view the development of Jewish law as a factor in the development and perfection of a just society. When we struggle with the place for science in our concept of God and God's role in nature. Knowing more about the world helps us get more out of Judaism and the converse is true as well.

The great Jewish philosopher, Maimonides was also a scientist, a physician, a historian, and poet. What makes his writings the most important in Jewish law since the writing of the Talmud is that he wrote with an awareness of the world around him, the development of thought and the advancement of science. His explanations of Jewish theology, tradition and practice take into consideration everything that he knew about the world up to that point, and if he were here today I think he would argue that knowing what he did about the rest of the world allowed him to experience Judaism more richly.

Their is an old an poignant insight into the Ghetto Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. Historians write that these Jewish communities often put lock on the inside of the ghetto walls, keeping out the influences of the rest of world, long before the non-Jewish community put locks on the outside of the walls to keep the Jews

penned in. In a time of persecution and pogroms, locks and walls are important and essential elements of Jewish society. But let us recognize when we are not in such a time as well, fling open the doors to knowledge and culture, punch holes in the walls to let a little more light in, while still keeping the perspective of what is part of Judaism and what is apart from Judaism. We if tonight has taught us nothing else, it has taught that we can successfully incorporate what is best from western culture and art without loosing our Jewishness. A knowledge of and an appreciation for the all that our world has to offer, will only enhance, enrich and inform our experience as Jews and improve our situation as a community.

Go home from Temple and watch PBS, read two books at a time, a study the Torah and 'The 7 Habits', keep Kosher and eat healthy. If we strive to take the best of both worlds, and we will in the end create a better world, and ultimately, that is what the commandment of *Tikkun Olam*, of repairing the world is all about.