

January 15, 2010

Shabbat Shalom!

When it comes to seeing into the future of the economy, the environment, health care, or aspects of our own lives, it is sometimes difficult to be an optimist. There may be facts and figures that preclude the possibility of proceeding into the future with a feeling of underlying hope. Some leaders may claim that attempts to improve current realities with new policies or strategies will necessarily fall short. There may be experts, advisors or a voice inside of us telling us that a supposed fix for a personal challenge won't work. We know that there are some proposals for progress that may seem "too good to be true," and, in many cases, they are (just watch television advertisements on all sorts of matters that make big promises). Yet, we can still maintain a well-founded trust that, when we face situations that call for our own perseverance, patience and ingenuity, there are always constructive and realistic solutions within our grasp.

We will be able to see those solutions as long as we can hold on to a glimmer of hope. In the Torah portion for this week, VA-ERA, Moses and Aaron went to the Israelites and told them that God would deliver them from slavery and bring them to a place where they could live in freedom. The people couldn't hear this positive message because of their "shortness of spirit" and the hard work imposed upon them. They had no strength to truly appreciate the promise of liberty being presented to them, much less to allow this promise to renew their faith and spur them to action. Much later, they would rejoice at their liberation, only to fall back into pessimism when they faced yet another crisis.

As we consider the life's work of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the day and weekend when we celebrate his legacy, we are reminded that "having a dream" is a prerequisite and a foundation for solutions that are realized only after years of hard work and commitment to a cause. May we, in our own lives and as a community, continue to dream, to plan, and to sustain a spirit that will always keep us moving forward with hope.

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry

January 7, 2010
Shabbat Shalom!

While reading in the Etz Hayim Torah Commentary about this week's portion, I was intrigued by one explanation of the burning bush. The commentary suggested that the symbol of the bush that seemed to be on fire, but was not consumed, represented the Israelites. The bush that remained intact could have been seen as a sign that the Israelites, who were facing cruelty and oppression, would survive their bondage and emerge whole and unscathed.

Each of us faces challenges in life, some that may seem insurmountable. Through our own strength and the support we receive from family, friends and community, we have the potential to endure with a sense of completeness and confidence. May the bush that was not consumed inspire us to stand tall and strong each day of our lives!

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry