

March 26, 2010

Shabbat Shalom and an almost Happy Pesach!

Emotions have been running high – perhaps, too high – in the wake of the passage health care legislation in Congress. The rhetoric throughout debate and discussions of the health care proposals has been pointed and piercing most of the time. The one area of agreement between Republican and Democratic leaders that emerged this week is that disagreements on how to improve health care in our country should not be expressed through physical violence or threats of harm to any person.

The Torah portion for this week speaks about a fire on the altar in the Tabernacle, the Israelite site for worship, that was to be kept burning continually and not allowed to go out. Some commentators have likened this physical fire to the fire that can burn inside each of us as a reflection of our spirit, our beliefs, and our passion for a cause or for life and community. We know that a fire can offer warmth, but that it can also become dangerous when it is out of control. The same could be said of our passionate opinions on an issue. “Keeping the fire burning” can mean articulating our views in a respectful, spirited and constructive manner AND listening attentively to others, in case there is something in their position that can cause our own “fire” to burn even more strongly. It does not mean that someone who disagrees with us should become the object - or victim - of our hatred. At that point, the passion of a firmly-held position can become a searing fire.

“A fire inside of us” can also signify the light of awareness, wisdom and understanding that comes from taking the views and ideas of many people into account when we form our opinions. Such a fire, handled with care, can become a guiding light to all people along a full ideological spectrum. May the fire in our minds and souls that is expressed through our words and actions become a torch that leads us all to a better place

*and actions become a torch that leads us all to a better place,
especially, at this time of year, to freedom for people all over
the world.*

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry