

March 5, 2009
Shabbat Shalom!

A clear vision of our own goals and the shared objectives of a community can enable us to chart a steady course for the future. The Torah reading for this week from the portion TETZAVEH notes that the Israelites were asked to bring clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for keeping lamps burning continually - or maintaining an Eternal Light, a NEIR TAMID. The familiar symbol of this inextinguishable light in a Temple sanctuary provides a beacon for each of us as individuals and all of us together as a community. This light that always burns can embody justice, freedom, equality, insight, creativity and hope. It can guide our way in times of personal and communal challenge, and it can offer us a sense of joy, whether during a holiday like Purim or throughout the year. May the eternal and external lights that clearly establish a path before us inspire us to discover the light within our own souls and within each other.

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.

March 12, 2009
Shabbat Shalom!

There are times when the situations in which we find ourselves make parts of our lives seem broken into small pieces that cannot be put back together. We may despair that the brokenness we perceive is beyond repair, whether due to our own actions or choices or as a result of the decisions of others that are beyond our control. More than we know, we have the ability to reassemble the pieces by healing a relationship, by seeing the loss of a job or position as a door that has closed so that a new one will open, or by adopting an approach to how we relate to our friends and family that creates in us a renewed optimism and a refreshed spirit. It is always possible to make whole what may have once been shattered.

The Torah reading for this week, KI TISA, portrays the Israelites worshipping a golden calf in the absence of Moses as their faith wanes in a God they cannot see. Moses descends on Mount Sinai and either throws the tablets of the Ten Commandments down in anger, or, as the rabbis surmise, the letters flew off the tablets so that their holiness would not be touched by what the Israelites had chosen to do, and the tablets became so heavy that Moses could no longer bear their true weight. Moses pleaded on behalf of the people, and gained a second chance to receive tablets – the symbol of divine teachings - on which he and the Israelites would base their spiritual and moral behavior. What was nearly lost – a covenant, the ties that bound a people together – was recovered and renewed. What was once shattered into small pieces became whole again.

The faith that we can overcome despair and restore such wholeness may elude us at times. Whether from the Torah or from our own experiences, we know that we can move forward by finding ways to support and strengthen each other. May we continue to build community in such a way that it will engender personal resolve and communal commitment to heal, to bind, and to renew.

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.