

March 23, 2018

Dear BQLI Region Friend,

*Tzav*. Command. This is the name of this week's Torah parashah. God tells Moses to command Aaron and his sons to perform sacrificial rituals and the priests then undergo the process of ordination. To be honest, at first read, the lists and specifications seem quite mind numbing. Upon further study, several points in *Tzav* came to resonate with me.

Firstly, God tells Moses that the Israelite people must present offerings to the anointed priests by *their own hands*. So, it's not enough to ask your neighbor to schlep your best goat to the altar on your behalf! To initiate and maintain your relationship with God, *you* must give of yourself in a meaningful and committed way.

Additionally, it is in *Tzav* that God first speaks of what synagogue-going Jews everywhere know of as the *ner tamid*, the Eternal Light, that adorns our sanctuaries. The text tell us, "The fire on the altar shall be kindled with it; it shall not go out. The priest shall burn logs upon it each and every morning and arrange the burnt offering on it... A continual fire shall be lit on the altar; it shall not go out." It is God's light, the symbol of His divine presence in our lives that never wanes.

Lastly, on a note of relevancy, the sacrificial system detailed in Leviticus may seem to have very little to do with our busy 21<sup>st</sup> Century lives. But, as Jewish women preparing for the rapidly approaching holiday of Passover, we know this couldn't be further from the truth! Ever mindful of the complex laws and rituals surrounding the preparation and eating of food, (for example, the challah baker takes a small piece of the dough and burns it to represent the sacrifices at the Temple) women have become the ritual specialists since the destruction of the Temple necessitated different ways to carry out sacrifices.

Jewish women have effectively continued to connect with God and our communities across the generations through the power of the domain we, most often, control. The constancy of our relationship with God, represented by the fires within our hearts, homes, and hearths, makes us spiritual leaders.

B'Shalom,  
Grace