

PARSHAT TZAV
LEVITICUS 6:1-8:36
HAFTARAH MALACHI 3:4-24
12 NISAN 5785/10 APRIL 2025



White Peonies in Ballerina Vase
Oil on linen by Dennis Perrin

PAINTING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

1. וְהָאֵשׁ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ... (Leviticus 6:5). וְאֵשׁ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תִּוָּקֵד בּוֹ (Leviticus 6:2).
The Jewish Publication Society translates these verses respectively as: “...the fire on the altar burns on it” and “...the fire on the altar.” Most of the other English translations of the Bible we consulted offer similar translations with the exception of the Authorized King James version, which in this case is truer to the Hebrew original in that it distinguishes clearly between the fire burning on the altar (*al ha-mizbe’ach*) and the fire burning in it (*tukad bo*), or if you wish, in him, namely in the officiating priest. It is not enough to have a fire burning on the altar, says the Chassidic interpretation pointedly, emphasizing that there must also be a “perpetual fire” of enthusiasm within us when we truly worship God. (Rabbi Pinchas Peli)
2. In the soul of everyone there lies a hidden point that is aflame with the love of God, a fire that cannot be put out. Even though “it may not go out” (Leviticus 6:6) here refers to a prohibition, it is also a promise. We also read: “The priest shall burn wood upon it each morning.” Everyone who worships God may be called a priest, and this arousal of love is the Service of the Heart, that which takes the place of sacrificial offerings. (Sefat Emet)

3. "...It is burned upon the altar all night until morning, while the fire on the altar is kept going on it" (Leviticus 6:2). "The priest...shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar, and place them beside the altar" (Leviticus 6:3). "He shall then take off his vestments and put on other vestments and carry the ashes outside the camp..." (Leviticus 6:4).

Three stages of an inspired life: (1) the deep inner experience; (2) integration of the experience into one's external character; (3) engagement with the external world. (Based on Rav Kook's commentary on Parshat Tzav)

4. Names of "things" and "colors" result in uni-dimensional, "stick-figure" shorthand versions, and obscure the ability to discern the actual relationships present in the subject. Painting with a "quiet" mind allows the artist to truly see into the subject and then translate that vision into paint. The quiet mind sees only abstract shapes of value and color that are not sullied or influenced by pre-assigned names or categories. Creating a painting is accomplished from the inside out. (Dennis Perrin, "Painting from the Inside Out: A Journey of Self-Discovery")
5. The longest journey
Is the journey inwards.
Of him who has chosen his destiny,
Who has started upon his quest
For the source of his being.
(Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings: Spiritual Poems and Meditations*)