

Dear Chavraya,

In the first light of morning, the sky streaked with the gray and pink of a new day rising, a beautiful meditation is said upon putting on the talis. In prayerful approach to the day, as we envelop ourselves in the soft garment, we are joined to the beauty of that moment in cosmic time. Holding the talis, meditating upon the *tzitzis* at its corners, we speak to our own soul and then to God: *Borchi nafshi/my soul, bless God! God my God, You are greatly exalted; You have garbed Yourself with majesty and splendor. You enwrap Yourself with light as with a garment; You spread the heavens as a curtain.* After placing the talis around our shoulders, drawing it close with words of blessing, with eyes closed we see and say, *b'orcha nireh or/in Your light we see light.*

God's light surrounds each one of us equally, a beautiful garment that identifies us wherever we go as a beloved child of God. This simple teaching is lost on each of the characters in this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Vayeshev*. Favoring Yosef with a special coat, Jacob undermines an essential bond that was meant to be among all of his children, as among all people. A teaching to each of his children of their special importance might have eased the rise of jealousy among the brothers and planted a seed of humility in Yosef.

In the strife it precipitates, the coat given to one child in an ancient tale comes to teach of how to weave the threads of God's light into a garment that is uniquely our own, but yet each one's is cut of the same cloth. Drawn to God's light of early morning, we weave a talis of our deeds that unwinds through the day. The talis of material substance so soft is but a reminder of the garment we are to weave in the way of our going out into the world. In a beautiful teaching spun remarkably from so few words about a coat that was given to one, the rebbe of Chernobyl, the *Ma'or Eynayim*, affirms the special role of each of us as weavers so fine. Through our deeds and from the ways of every generation in its time, we all together create garments for the Torah herself, and even for God. Emphasizing the eternal nature of Torah, the *Ma'or Eynayim* gives equal standing to those of every generation, *the Torah is clothed in tales according to the times/she'nit'lavsha b'sippurei ha'ma'asiyot k'fi haz'man.... In the time of the ancestors..., the Torah was clothed in their tales, so it needs to be in every time.* So it is explained that the Torah must be in every person and in every age.

In the telling of a coat that separated siblings from each other, may we see the thread of light that joins us all together, enveloped in one great talis. As we come this week to raise up the light of Chanukkah, may we see God's light in the light of one another.

Shabbat shalom,  
Rabbi Victor