

Dear Chavraya,

Once, many years ago, when facing what seemed to be insurmountable barriers in my life, a Quaker friend offered encouraging words of Quaker wisdom, "Way will open." Calm and steady in their optimism, these words have held me in good stead over the years, even as I have often offered them to others in difficult straits.

As we face our own barriers, or fear being swept away sometime by the floodwaters of life, imagine that moment when our ancestors stood by the shores of the sea. That is where we stand this week in *Parashat B'Shallach*, the roiling waters before us, the Egyptian army bearing down behind us. There are times such as that when we wonder if a way will really open. The greatest danger is to remain passive. In the midst of doubt and despair we are called to act. In the simple act of Moses raising his staff and extending his hands, there is a sign of action. In an old freedom song, that moment is depicted with greater urgency, "Moses stood on the Red Sea shore, smotin' the water with a two by four...." In a telling of the rabbis the call to act is not upon Moses alone, the waters parting only when one of the people, Nachshon ben Aminadav, walks into the sea up to his nostrils.

In the face of great challenge, whether in our own lives or in the world around us, when there seems to be no way forward, it takes great faith to act, to believe a way will open. Faith is the internal action needed to inspire action in the world. Offering the parting of the Sea as a paradigm of faith in action, there is a beautiful teaching in a Chassidic work called *Siach Sarfei Kodesh; The parting of the Reed Sea obligates each one to remember all the days of her or his life that the parting of the Sea occurs every day, whenever we pass through a place that has no path by which to pass. And it is the parting of the Sea whenever we transcend all barriers, separations, and negations....*

Believing that there is a way forward is the first step in making it happen. Whatever sea blocks the way of your journey, may you hear those simple words once offered to me, "way will open."

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor