

Dear Chavraya,

One of those good old songs for a low-down day that makes you feel a bit better just for singing or hearing it is "Pack Up Your Sorrows" by Richard Farina. The voice of a friend calls out through the refrain, reminding you that you're not alone, *But if somehow you could pack up your sorrows and give them all to me, you would lose them, I know how to use them, give them all to me.*

Itself like an old friend, this song came to me this morning as I read a teaching of the Slonimer Rebbe. Amazed at the arrival of words from another time in my life that came floating on wings of a melody long dormant, I marveled at the miraculous workings of the mind. Two disparate worlds joined by a universal thread of human experience, all one in the womb of consciousness. Torah is the gate of Jewish entry into the infinite cosmos.

This week's Torah portion, which served as context and catalyst for this morning's weave of worlds, is *Parashat T'rumah*. The entire focus of the portion is the building of the desert sanctuary, the *mishkan*. God reaches out to us with words of seeking, *Take for Me an offering of the heart from each one who is willing.* The details are myriad and mesmerizing, gold and silver and copper, sky-blue wool, purple and scarlet wool, byssus and goats' hair; rams' skins dyed red, *tachash* skins and *shittim* wood; oil and spices and precious stones. For all of the physical detail, much commentary and teaching turns to the metaphysical, to mind and heart and metaphor.

In the manner of that tradition, the Slonimer Rebbe writes of the inner sanctuary that each one can build in her or his own heart. Like the physical *mishkan*, where offerings would be made of field and flock, so in the sanctuary of the heart can offerings of self be given to God. In a beautiful teaching, the Slonimer sings in his own way to "pack up your sorrows," *There are specific matters of the heart for which each person most yearns. In giving over this precious yearning of the heart as an offering to God, so shall each one build his or her own sanctuary.*

All of our yearnings, whether tinged with sorrow or hope, are holy. They are part of who we are. In the end, alas, sorrows cannot be packed up and given away, but they can be shared, and so become lighter. At the start of every Shabbos, addressing God as *Yedid Nefesh/Friend of my soul*, we sing a poem of love and longing. Each one of us can be a *yedid nefesh* to another, helping to transform sorrow and yearning into sacred offerings of the heart.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor