

Dear Chavraya,

This is Shabbos Hagadol, the Shabbos before Pesach. It is so called after the last verses of the haftarah chanted tomorrow from the prophet Malachi: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of God, that he may turn the heart of the parents back to the children, and the heart of the children back to their parents...." At the very beginning of this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Tzav*, we are told of the ascent offering that is to burn through the night until the morning. From its embers the new day's fire is to be kindled. From out of darkness comes the morning light, a new flame from the embers of yesterday. The word that speaks of its burning upon the altar through the night is *mokdah*. The first letter, the letter "mem," is to be written very small, much smaller than the other letters, and so it is written in the Torah itself. It is meant to teach of humility, that in the end it is not the offering upon the altar that God desires, but the rising of our hearts and the way of our walking in the world. As the prophet Micah reminds of what God seeks of us, "only to do justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God." In that spirit, I offer this my prayer for Pesach this year, still in formation, to share with you and with the Holy One.

Shabbat shalom v'Chag same'ach,
Rabbi Victor

A Prayer for Pesach, 5770
Rabbi Victor Hillel Reinstein

Holy One, Whose name is Being, help us to become who we are meant to be, in Your image each one and all of us, Your people Israel and all peoples, each one Your own

Strife it seems does not cease, how great Your pain must be, Your children quarreling so, to give You *nachas*, pleasure of soul, I pray we come to do, the breath of every living thing praising You

Leading us from out of slavery long ago, You illumined the path to freedom giving us the vision and the way, when to the Promised Land we had arrived to love our neighbor as ourselves

And the stranger dwelling among us, the orphan and the widow the most vulnerable to sustain with compassion and love, our own needs even to subsume for a greater good, fruit of earth, of hand and hearth to share

This is the freedom for which I pray, to know the way to the promised land of every time and place from out of the narrowness of constricted vision out into the parched terrain streams of empathy welling up

Touch our hearts and soften them how hard they have become, the Pharaoh deep within, awaken us through the telling of redemption long ago, and from the chains of arrogance generosity of spirit release

In this land of America the language of hate and disdain that poisons, violence and vitriol rending the fabric, open our hearts to know that liberty and justice is only for all when freedom also means from want

And in the Land of Israel, what has become of us, the seed of Abraham and Sarah at times unrecognizable, *rachmanim b'nei rachmanim* / compassionate children of compassionate ancestors, their legacy help us to reclaim

In these lands of our being, more than civility our ways to examine, give us the courage to look beyond our selves and feel the needs of others, the sick in need of healing, the dispossessed of home, a state awaiting of their own

Opening the door for Eliyahu the door to our hearts let it be, the prophet entering where Pharaoh once had been, turning hearts then to each other before the coming of the great and awesome day that is Your own

When peace shall flow like a river, on wings of understanding redemption finally come as at the first so long ago, Pesach of the future dawning, bringing near the day that is neither day nor night.