

Dear Chavraya,

I have a pin from long ago that has Martin Luther King's picture on it encircled by the words, "Don't let the dream die." In their negative expression, I have always felt that these words don't go far enough. The only way that we keep the dream from dying is by living the dream ourselves. The better slogan, it has always seemed to me, should be, "Live the dream." As we approach Martin Luther King day, this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Va'era*, offers important teaching toward being and becoming the dream in the way that we live.

Moses and Aaron have come before Pharaoh with their call for freedom, *shalach et ami/let My people go!* At the outset of the portion, God gives Moses greater insight into the Divine nature. God shares with Moses the holiest of God's names, that formed of the letters *yud, hey, vav, hey*, the name we do not pronounce. The letters that form this name are simply the letters of the verb "to be." In response to Moses' earlier seeking to understand the nature of God and how to convey that to the people, God told Moses to tell the people that *Ehiyeh/I Will Be* sent him to lead the people out of slavery. And then God gives Moses a fuller name, *Ehiyeh Asher Ehiyeh/I Will Be That Which I Will Be*. God's name conveys God's essence as ever Being and Becoming. As we are created in God's image, so are we ever being and becoming. We are not trapped in slavery forever. We are not stuck in one moment in time. Ever being and becoming, we are able to overcome and fulfill the dream.

The very letters of God's most holy name that is here given to Moses reflect the source of human equality, that every person is created in the image of God. Arranged vertically, the little letter *yud* represents the head, the letter *hey*, with its horizontal top and vertical sides, represents the shoulders and arms, the straight letter *vav* represents the spine, and the second *hey* represents the pelvis and the legs. The human form is reflected in the very image of God's name of being and becoming. Carrying God's image we are the dream, the dream lives in each one of us if we allow it to be, to emerge.

In a beautiful teaching on *Parashat Va'era*, the Slonimer Rebbe calls for faith and trust in the possibility of redemption. Remarkably, he places the burden and the challenge for that possibility squarely on us. A rebbe of our own time, having died in Jerusalem some ten years ago, he knows our world. In this teaching he wrestles with the Holocaust and in a rare reference to current events, having given this teaching in the early 90's, he speaks of the Gulf War. Perhaps struggling with his own faith, he poignantly quotes in Yiddish an earlier rebbe, the Kovriner: *Vos far a zise velt, vos far a lichtikeh velt, far di vos lign nisht in iher/For a sweet world, for a world of light, for such a world there can be no falsehood among you.* And so too, the teaching continues, it shall be a bitter and dark world when falsehood is rife.

It all depends on our own integrity, on whether we live in a way that honors the image of God in ourselves and in every other person. So freedom begins and is sustained, if in all the ways of day to day we live the dream. May his memory be a blessing.

Shabbat shalom, Rabbi Victor