

Dear Chavraya,

Excitement was building to a crescendo, as construction of the *mishkan/sanctuary* was about to begin. This was a project that involved absolutely everyone, *kol adat b'nei Yisrael/the entire community of the children of Israel*. At the outset of this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Vayakhel*, we can imagine people rushing about, hurrying to bring their contributions of material goods to the chief artisans, and then running to learn what their actual hands-on role would be. Whether as artisan, teacher or apprentice, everyone had a task, and in that was the project's success.

Suddenly, with the whole community in motion, word goes out – stop! Work on this most sacred expression of holiness in space is to give way to Shabbos, weekly expression of holiness in time. The people are told in effect to put their tools down and hurry home to get cleaned up and ready for Shabbos.

While sacred places and objects add richness and beauty to our lives, ultimately Judaism is a celebration of time. We were able to survive the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and exile from the Land of Israel because our national life was not dependent upon place, however much our lives were entwined with that place. Torah is portable, and so too is the calendar that is rooted in Torah. As much as we have journeyed as a people through space, our primary journey is through time. While our travels from place to place have often begun in tragedy, our travel in time is always a celebration, except when we pause to remember the tragedies of broken moments in time.

While the precedence of time over space is rooted in Torah, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel becomes the most eloquent voice for what that means. Speaking of Shabbos as a "Palace in Time," and of our ritual as the "architecture of time," Heschel reminds us that our "cathedrals," found as days "in the magnificent stream of a year," are indestructible. The fulfillment of time is represented in a vision of the "End of Days," the time of swords turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, the time known as *Yom she'kulo Shabbat/the Day that is all Shabbos*. As we make Shabbos each week, we bring a little more Shabbat shalom into the world, helping to bring the ultimate Shabbos closer. Each of us has a part to play in the grand unfolding of time. It is not what we have in our lives, but what we do in the time that we have which gives meaning to our lives. Every life is a celebration in time.

Even as our ancestors tried to make sense of stopping right in the midst of so much busy-ness and such purposeful doing, so the same question remains for us. Rabbi Heschel helps us to take a breath, to slow down, and to appreciate the beauty of a day: "Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world."

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor