

Dear Chavraya,

It is good to be back in the embrace of real time, carried on the flow of ordinary holiness as it fills each day. It has been a very full journey through the month of Tishre. We entered the gate of the Days of Awe five weeks ago tomorrow night with the midnight *S'lichos* service. We made the transition into a new year, touched by the joy of our being together, filling the shtibl with our presence, with so much of life in all of its moods and modes carried by each of us, reflected through the lens of all of our varied experiences in coming to that time and place. We shared *nigunim* together, created a prayerful weave of words and silence, of song and laughter, shed tears of joy and of sorrow, rose up to the quavering sound of the shofar, itself singing of joy and sorrow, brokenness and wholeness, rising higher than we thought we could. We remembered those who have been and felt their absence, aware then of our own mortality, feeling the challenge to fill our days with meaning, to heal the world and to heal ourselves, to write ourselves into the Book of Life. And then we continued the journey, raising the sukkah, praying that the whole world shall become a sukkah of peace, celebrating the harvest, gathering in and opening up in the way of heart and home. We danced with the Torah and each other, sacred scroll upon trees of life, completing its reading, beginning again, the way of life.

For all of the relief that comes with leaving the intensity of Tishre, I feel a certain sadness that I think of in the way of "postpartum" sorrow. The gift born of our being together is precious, and in the time apart that was its gestation there was something magical. I felt in a higher place, intense joy and joyful intensity that reaches a crescendo on Simchas Torah, time for introspection in being with ourselves, and time to be with each other, building and repairing interpersonal bridges, all as a different way and manner of being than we know in the day to day of ordinary time and weekly pursuits. We can't stay in that place, though, we need to be born into the year, born as the world itself, ever seeking to become. Tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh Marcheshvan, the new moon of the month of Cheshvan, always referred to with the prefix *Mar*, meaning bitter, due to its lack of holy days, days set apart in the way of all of those we have so recently left. Some prefer to greet Cheshvan with joy, enough of the intensity, of the time apart. I feel the *mar*, a tinge of sadness, if not bitterness. In part, I feel that poignant ache as a challenge to fill this month with sweetness. The esrog's scent lingers, quite literally, in the shtibl, reminding of all the beauty we have created together, of all that we have held and beheld, now to renew and remind of such possibility in real time.

This is the week of *Parashat No'ach*, the story of the flood, so much violence filling the world, violence of God and of people, and then the hope of each arising, God's promise never to destroy the world again, still waiting for such promise in return from us. Formed of light and droplets of water, God's rainbow promise is also formed of words, God's prayer that is meant to be our own: *The days of the earth shall be forever; seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall never cease* (Gen. 8:22). Time continues its flow, days of earth and of seasons turning, each day holy in its own way, bright and bitter in the way we behold and in the way we are held. God's hope was planted in the Garden of Eden in the very beginning and was carried into real time in the ark amidst the

storm, and so the song of Shabbos upon our lips, each week to remind of holiness in time.

Shabbat shalom and Chodesh tov,  
Rabbi Victor