

Dear Chavraya,

As the season's turn through the journey of a year, we witness the shades of each season's light, the golden glow of autumn, the long shadows of winter, the emerging light of spring, and now the smiling warmth of summer's light that beckons. Each season has its own shade of light, its own beauty, as does each person.

This week's Torah portion, *B'ha'alotcha*, is about raising up light in the world. Instructions are directed to the *kohanim* in regard to lighting the menorah, *b'ha'alotcha et hanerot*, "when you cause the lights to go up." It is not simply a matter of kindling new light, but of raising up and sharing light that is our own. Think of a *shammash*, a servant candle, its flame held to a new wick, patiently, expectantly waiting for a new flame to rise. Transferring light, the elder flame is held in place until old and new soar together as one flame. The elder then withdraws to behold the steady glow of new light. It is the dance of generations, of parent and child, of teacher and student.

The menorah in the desert sanctuary and, later, in the ancient Temple served as the *ner tamid*, the eternal light, which today glows above the holy ark in every synagogue. The *ner tamid* today burns all the time, while the menorah burned only from dusk to dawn. With darkness descending, light was kindled upon the golden branches as day turned to night. Burning through the night, the menorah's light rose in the darkness, shining toward the dawn of a new day.

Each of us brings a unique light to the world. Every soul shines with its own hue. Remember the old freedom song, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine..., let it shine, let it shine.... Wherever there is hatred, I'm gonna let it shine..., let it shine, let it shine...." Raising up light in the world, every soul is one particle of light that shines in the great rainbow of humanity. Don't hold your light in, raise it up and let it shine!

Shabbat shalom,  
Rabbi Victor