

Dear Chavraya,

I find myself in a similar time and place as when I sat down to write last week at this time, returning from a funeral. A number of us from Nehar Shalom were among the mourners for a neighbor and friend of Nehar Shalom, Reena Kling, *aleha ha'shalom/peace be upon her*. Reena was one of the truly righteous souls who help sustain the world, and so shall her soul continue to sustain the world and us, her song, her wisdom, her encompassing joy and love continuing to surround. Amidst the deep sorrow for her passing, there is something uplifting simply in thinking about her, drawing on the hope with which she lived, even to the very end.

Of teaching that comes in the turning of time, of time and space, wherever we are in the world and in time, touched by the pain of these times. In the turning of each week toward Shabbos, we are given a path of hope, but up to us to follow it and seek the way home. Encountering people through the week, conversations that mirror each other, a common thread that tells of how much the brokenness in the world is felt within our selves. The converse is then equally true, of how the brokenness within our selves plays out in the world. Healing our selves is part of healing the world and healing the world is part of healing our selves. Reena truly saw the beauty in each person and in the world, in spite of all the pain she knew through her long illness. It is a gift to be able to hold joy and hope in spite of all, a gift for the one who is so blessed, and a gift for those who know the one so blessed. Over time and at different times, we can each become the blessed one who is able to see the good in spite of all, uplifting our selves and others.

Jewish tradition teaches us to look ahead, a strand of hope so deeply woven into who we are. It is the way of this springtime season as marked in the Jewish calendar. No matter what is happening in the world, at this time of year as we make our way from Pesach to Shavuous, we count each day, that we might make each day count. From Egypt to Sinai, from liberation to revelation, we learn to give meaning to freedom, to give meaning to each day that is given to us, never knowing the allotted number, but striving to make each day count. As we seek to find meaning in the unfolding of days, the personal and the global become one within ourselves. Wish as we might that we could save the whole world, each one is needed to save one part of the world as they encounter it, to do the good that only they can do in the place where they are. It is a comforting and encouraging aspect of the deep rabbinic teaching that whoever saves one life, it is as though they have saved a whole world. Beyond teaching the importance of every single life, we learn that we can save the world by doing what we can to help make a difference in even one other life.

Counting toward wholeness, toward purpose, toward a world of peace, within our selves and all around, this week's Torah portion, *Parashat B'har-B'chukotai*, draws on the model of counting the Omer at this season and looks to greater cycles, concentric circles of hope turning ever outward. We learn of counting six years, then to give the land its Shabbos in the seventh year, the *Sh'mita* year. Coming through a cycle of seven *Sh'mita* years, we come to the Jubilee year, when all are to return to their land and their family. At the end of Yom Kippur,

the Jubilee is announced with a great shofar: *you shall have shofar sounds go forth throughout the land. And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year, and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a year of homebringing and shall be to you as such, and each one of you shall return to their landed property and each one of you shall return to their family.*

The personal and the global become one as we count toward meaning, a reordering of society and of our own lives. It is the teaching of each week's Shabbos as we make our way home, pausing to breathe, to see beauty, to envision the way the world can be. We are taught through cycles of seven, cycles both great and small, to look ahead. The Slonimer Rebbe teaches that as the Shabbos of each week is a remembrance of Creation, so the Sh'mita year is a reminder of a day that has not yet been, the day that is all Shabbos, *yom she'kulo Shabbos*. Shabbos each week is a vision of creation fulfilled.

Coming home to Shabbos, may we find strength and comfort, reminding each other of the meaning and purpose in our lives and in life itself. In the counting of our days that each day might count, may the song of Reena's soul inspire and enliven, touching each weary brow with a kiss of joy. May her memory be the blessing of her life.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor