

Dear Chavraya,

I apologize for not being able to write more now. I have just rushed in from New York, where I went early this morning to guide the funeral for Ruth's mother. It is a privilege and gift to see the places from which we've come, to enter the realm of family beyond the person we know among us, and so for all of us, reminded of our connections in the greater world. It is the Shabbat of *Parashat Bo*. Moses is told to come to Pharaoh not to go, a glimmer of hope, the possibility of engagement offered, come, engage. There is much in the parsha that finds its way to the Haggadah, so much about the Pesach story as the Exodus begins. There is one verse, easy to pass over, perhaps as in Passover, a verse that is filled with foreboding and yet becomes a source of great hope. Just before the terrible tenth plague, the killing of the first born of Egypt, the Torah says, *va'y'hi b'chatzi ha'layla/it came to pass in the middle of the night*. For all the terror of what is about to happen to the Egyptians, a leader gone mad, refusing to hear the cries of abused people, this verse becomes a seedbed of hope. From that verse, the Zohar teaches, *leyt n'hora eleh migo chashucha/there is no light except that which emerges from darkness*. From the midst of darkness, we look toward the light, we nurture it and help it to rise. So too, this verse becomes the source for a beautiful song at the end of the Seder. The last verse of the song is one of my favorite moments of the Seder, a verse filled with yearning for peace and wholeness, *karev yom asher hu lo yom v'lo layla/bring near the day that is neither day nor night*. It is the day that is all Shabbos, the day to come when swords are turned to plowshares and spears to pruning hooks. Hope embedded in the midst of darkness, light rising in the middle of the night. So may it be.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor