

Dear Chavaya,

On Wednesday morning, as the turning of the week shifted toward Shabbos, we were asked to pretend that we were already there, to be in that moment in space and time as if we were in Shabbos time. It was a workshop for cantors and rabbis, led by the musicians of Nava Tehila, a wonderful Jerusalem spiritual community. In Jerusalem, on one *erev* Shabbos every month, just before Shabbos has arrived, they bring together hundreds of people from across the Jewish spectrum. Gathered at the old train station, their music and spirit joins people with each other and with something greater, however each one understands the Holy One to be, tracks that hum from heart to heart, a great network of interconnection. It is the essence of what Shabbat is meant to be.

In the midst of the week, in the midst of its very Wednesday middle, we were asked to let go of all the stresses of work and life, to step off the tracks that run parallel to each other but never join, just to be, to breathe and let go, to be with ourselves and with each other. In the way of Chassidic singing of *nigunim*, with a silent pause following the *nigun* being as important as the melody itself, so the musicians paused deeply following each piece they played and sang, and so they gave pause to us. It was a taste of Shabbos in the middle of the week, and for that I was grateful.

I thought of a Chassidic story of two yeshiva *bochers* who wanted to see if, more than a taste, they could create Shabbos itself in the midst of the week. They prepared food, they davened, they learned, but somehow it didn't feel fully Shabbos. One of them said emphatically, "Ah, it's because we don't have your wife's kugel!" Then they realized that it was more than the absence of kugel. It was the absence of others, of that interconnection from heart to heart, of knowing that everywhere in the Jewish world people were chanting the same Torah portion, that in towns and cities and all the far-flung places where Jews live, tables were spread, hearts were open, *nigunim* sung, prayers wafting upon the breeze and carried to the highest heavens. It was for the two students a sweet moment of pause, a foretaste, but not quite being there. It was an intimation, "as if," but not quite there yet.

On that Wednesday morning with Nava Tehila, or with two yeshiva *bochers* in another time and place, that "as if" that we felt and they felt is in truth a deep and powerful teaching about the very essence of Shabbos. Shabbos itself is both real in the moment and is yet an intimation of another time, a time that does not yet exist in the world of space. Shabbos as we know it is meant to be a reflection of the world as it might be, a world of complete peace and harmony, of swords turned to plowshares and spears to pruning hooks. The nature of Shabbos observance is meant to create an intimation and approximation of that time. Entering into a different realm from the day to day of our lives, allowing for prayerful reflection, for song and silence, time to be and to love, inviting others to our table, being guests at another's table, opening the doors of home and heart, being in community, beholding the beauty of what is, not seeking to bend the earth or people to our will. Anger is to be put aside on Shabbos, realizing the power of gentle words to soothe and pacify. Weapons are not to be carried on Shabbos, not even the dress sword of a uniform, the rabbis ruled, drawing on the

words of Isaiah the prophet, *and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks*. As swords shall not have a place in that time to come, when the world shall be filled with Shabbat shalom, so they should not have a place on the seventh day that is that day's reflection.

The vision of Isaiah is of a time that is all Shabbos, *yom she'kulo Shabbos*. We pray every Shabbos in the blessings after eating, *ha'rachaman hu yanchilenu yom she'kulo Shabbos... / Compassionate One, cause us to inherit the day that is all Shabbos*. In the meantime, we spend one seventh of all of our days on earth living "as if" it was already that time, as if the world had already been so transformed. Rashi urges us to enter Shabbos *as if/k'ilu* all of our work was done. That little word, *k'ilu/as if*, becomes the great hope of Shabbos. It is the hope that in spending one seventh of our days rehearsing for that time, living "as if" it was that time, we shall transform and transcend the way the world is and bring to fruition the way the world might be. As each Shabbos unfolds to the next, the days of each successive week are infused with a hint of Shabbos, until someday we shall arrive in real time to the day that is all Shabbos.

In this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Emor*, there is laid out as a beautiful map in time the Torah's primary delineation of the yearly cycle. The holy days of the year are called *mo'adei ha'Shem/the appointed times of meeting with God*. The root *ya'ad* indicates a gathering in time and space by intention. It is the root of community, *eydah*, as an intentional gathering of people in common purpose to create something greater than each one, but which needs each one. The word *mo'ed*, meaning festival or holy day, is the same word that refers to the tent of meeting as in the holy place of the sanctuary, the *ohel mo'ed*. Through intention, time and space merge and Shabbos peace can fill the place where we are. Further on in the *parsha*, a reflection of time unfolding, the Torah teaches of offerings to be brought every Shabbos to the sanctuary, using a fascinating phrase that encapsulates the time-space continuum of possibility, *b'yom ha'Shabbat b'yom ha'Shabbat/in Shabbos day in Shabbos day*, or as Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch translates it, *Sabbath by Sabbath continually*.

That is the goal, *Sabbath by Sabbath continually*, coming ever closer to that time, to *the day that is all Shabbos/yom she'kulo Shabbos*. As we foster *k'ilu* consciousness, learning to live *as if* it was already that time, so it shall come to be, even on a Wednesday morning.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor