

Dear Chavraya,

I write with but a brief sharing now, offering a blessing of light as we come into the Shabbos of Chanukkah. At the turning of a year, overlapping cycles of time and ways of counting, we are aware of seasons passing. My uncle died this week, Leo Rabinovitz, whom we called Sonny. His wife, my aunt Edie, died only three weeks ago, their time apart so brief, the light of their souls woven together now as the wicks of a Havdalah candle, burning bright. I know too of other sorrows among us, people joined together, all of us as wicks that draw from the oil in the wellsprings of our souls. Simply in our presence we illumine the way forward, helping each other to take the next step. We are all candles on the menorah of life.

This week's Torah portion is *Parashat Miketz*. The opening words become much more than the opening to the parsha, *va'y'hi miketz sh'natayim yamim/it came to pass at the end of two full years*. Referring to two additional years that Yosef spent in prison, until called to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, the rabbis see in the opening words a much greater span of time. They see in the word *ketz/end* an allusion to the end of days, to Messianic time, when there shall be peace and harmony, a flowering of all the good of which humanity is capable. They draw a beautiful phrase from the book of Job, *ketz sam la'choshech/one who puts an end to darkness*. The reference is not to God, but to people, in the singular, to each one of us.

We are not only as candles on the menorah, we are each as the shammash, the one by whose light the light of others is kindled. There are times when we are each needed to be the shammash for another. Of challenges in the world all around us, when night seems so long and deep, the Slonimer Rebbe offers much needed teaching. He asks, *how to break... and banish the darkness/aych lishbor... u'l'garesh ha'chash'chut?* His answer is disarmingly simple, *rak l'hadlik et ha'or/only to kindle the light*.

As we come into this Shabbos of Chanukkah, kindling an abundance of light, may we be the candles, our light shining bright, each one the shammash helping to raise the light of another. Of soul light and candle light, together we illumine the way forward.

Shabbat shalom, Happy Chanukkah, Happy New Year,
Rabbi Victor