

Dear Chavraya,

The blinding rain of a summer storm came down in sheets. In the midst of darkness and torrent, the doorbell rang. I wondered who it could possibly be as I left a meeting to answer and see. The person I saw, familiar to me, though not close, was dripping wet and shaking. I knew right away that such shaking and distress was not only of cold and wet. Getting some hot tea, return to the meeting would wait. Holding the tea as one would a Kiddush cup, and in a way it was, a vessel receiving comingled tears and droplets of rain, waters of life from a well of despair, the night visitor stood, words coming slowly..., "I can't see any way to go on."

Offering my hand to hold, my first concern was immediate safety, whether there were destructive thoughts, whether a full discussion could wait until morning, whether other help was needed. Ascertaining that beyond the bleakness of night and soul there was not an immediate danger, we talked for a time, agreeing to continue in the light of day. Resting on the porch until the rain stopped, my visitor then went out into the night, a veil of tears lifted perhaps a little, just enough at least to see the way home on rain drenched streets.

I thought through the week about the words that had been said, aching and halting, "I can't see a way to go on." In the wet and dark of that night it was hard to see a way to go on. All seemed to have closed in. In the morning we talked and the veil had lifted somewhat, sunshine drying God's tears left upon the ground, kissing away the tears of a troubled soul. Would, of course, that it were that simple. Heartache and struggle don't simply go away. We know the hard work needed to uproot despair. We talked the next day of anger and conflict, mostly with self, the challenge not to take out anger upon oneself any more than upon another, to take a breath first when anger rises, before speaking to one self or others. The first challenge is to see one self in the morning light, freshness of hope and possibility rising, when we can see ourselves with greater clarity than we can in the midst of pain. In the midst of pain, though, Rebbe Nachman says to squint, thereby to see more clearly the way ahead. I thought in a new way of the morning blessing, *Blessed are You, God, our God, Sovereign of the universe, Who gives the heart understanding to distinguish day from night/l'hachvin beyn yom u'veyn lyla*

To see the way forward begins within our selves, with the inner eye squinting to see the path of our own soul. It is all in the very first word of this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Re'eh/See!* How we see others begins with how we see our selves. *See! I am setting before you today blessing and curse.* It is couched in optimism, *the blessing that you will hear/et ha'b'racha asher tish'm'u.* You can do it! Without minimizing the bleakness of low moments in our lives, or the depths of despair from which some tragically never emerge, to see our own essential place in this world is a way of seeing, a way to be nurtured over time. When we come to recognize our own value, that we are each needed in this world for who we are, then in those moments when we can't see the way to go on, we yet know it is there. A Quaker friend once shared with me words of her tradition's wisdom, "way will open." In the morning light the way becomes clearer, but it begins with our squinting in the night, trying to see our own value through the pain. However much our place and purpose may seem unclear at times, our very

presence in this world is the proof that we are needed and important. That is the signature theme of the Slonimer Rebbe's teaching, that each of us has a unique purpose and task for which we are in this world. Helping us to see the preciousness of our own worth, and thereby that of others, I share the Slonimer's words on *Parashat Re'eh*:

There is no person who is just like another person, from the creation of the first human onward. There is not a single person who is able to repair that which another is meant to repair. Thus, each person has a mission from above that is their own, to repair something specific. It is for this reason that a person has been brought down from the upper world to this world below and no other person since the creation of the world is able to repair that which devolves upon them to repair. The words "See! I am setting before you today blessing and curse" are not meant to emphasize fulfillment of the mitzvot or matters of reward and punishment, but rather the special mission and task of each person in their world. The greatest blessing is when a person fulfills their mission from above, and brings repair to that matter for which they were brought down to the world....

As hands around a cup of tea at night, hand in hand in the morning light, when the path seems blocked may we help each other to see the way to go on.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor