

Dear Chavraya,

In Los Angeles to celebrate the wedding of our son, Yossi, with Hannah, my thoughts of Torah and love merge, becoming as one. It is the week of *Parashat Sh'mot*, with which we begin the second book of the Torah, *Sefer Sh'mot/the Book of Names*. In this Torah portion of names, there is an abiding image of love, Moses turning aside, pausing, taking time to notice, *behold, the bush burns with fire and the bush is not consumed / ha'sneh bo'er ba'esh v'ha'sneh einenu u'kal*. In the teaching of the Slonimer Rebbe it becomes the image of a flower, the husk that falls away from the kernel of the seed, the shell, the k'lipah that opens to reveal the innermost place, the life force, love that burns but is not consumed.

It is the song of Torah, a song of the people, as in the questions asked by the *maydl* of the *bocher*, the young woman of the young man in the Yiddish folk song, *Tumbalalaika, what can burn without burning itself out / vos ken brenen un nit oyf heren?* And she says, with a twinkle in her eye, *narisher bocher, vos darfst du fregn/ foolish boy, why do you need to ask? Love can burn without burning itself out / libe ken brenen un nit oyf heren*.

Love in all of its many forms is a bush of revelation that burns and is not consumed, love between lovers, within families, love between heaven and earth, the flow of love out into the world from each of our hearts. On the image of the burning bush as a metaphor of love, the Slonimer Rebbe offers an exquisitely beautiful teaching, *ahava m'karevet et ha'ge'ula u'mevi'a la'tikun ha'gamur/love brings near the redemption and brings toward the complete repair*.

On this first day of a new year, the start of a new book of Torah, the first day in Yossi and Hannah's marriage, may love flow out into the world and bring near redemption and repair.

Shabbat shalom,  
Rabbi Victor