

Dear Chavraya,

On my way to look for something else, I came across my college yearbook. It is largely a literary journal, filled with photographs and poetry, class pictures, such as they are, tucked in at the end, whimsical, moody, unmistakably hopeful.

Turning to the first page, I paused to be with a photograph, to walk on the way of which it told, two stands of reeds rising from snow, small footsteps imprinted on the snowy path between. Reading the caption, I realized that the words and photograph were my own. As time had shared them with me, I share them with you:

And now my young friends, I wistfully bid you to come along. We shall walk among the reeds and rushes and somewhere along nature's path we shall find a pleasant place to rest. There is much work to be done though, and soon we must return, and soon we must return.

A thread of thought whose spinning had begun in those formative years, I was struck by a sentiment still dear today, continuing to unwind, a strand of thought in time. I was working then with young children through a local youth program, wishing I could take them away from the harsh realities of their lives, to offer some respite at least for a time. The work to make their lives better would remain, returning though to a city's mean streets with perspective renewed and spirit refreshed.

It is the essence of Shabbos, a weekly retreat in order to be renewed and refreshed, better able then to return to the doing, to making a more just and peaceful world. That during the days of the week we might more effectively help to bring the *day that is all Shabbos / yom she'kulo Shabbos*, we need to be refreshed, to return with strength renewed. So we are reminded when we make the Shabbos afternoon Kiddush, that even the Holy One needed to pause from the work of creating a world, *and on the seventh day God rested, and was refreshed / u'va'yom ha'sh'vi'i shavat va'yi'nafash*. It is a verb formed from *nefesh/soul, va'yi'nafash/to be resouled*. It was our theme for the Social Justice Beit Midrash this week, "Don't Just Do Something, Stand There—Resilience and Self-Care for Long-term Activism.

It is a teaching that quietly emerges from the beginning of this week's Torah portion, a double portion, *Parashat Tazria-M'tzarah*. *Isha ki tazria v'yaldah/when a woman nurtures seed and gives birth....* Time is needed then, when the good hour finally comes, time in which to bond and be alone with the child, to retreat and renew. A world has been created and Shabbos time is needed to take in the wonder, to behold. The Torah specifies time to be taken, not to appear in the Temple with offerings of gratitude until time alone has elapsed. There is a different length of time for male and female child, perhaps problematic, perhaps not, each one's own needs and way of relationship, and for parents too in which to be and bond.

It seems fitting in this week's teaching of time taken to bond, of considering stresses in the world around and reminders to renew, that Mieke and I are taking a brief respite to visit our children and grandchildren in Los Angeles. Taking

time apart, Shabbos time, we felt urgent need to behold in person the wonder of little ones growing and becoming.

It will be a wonderful Shabbos in the shtibl, many people having stepped forward to carry on in the way community is meant to be. Please support those who have prepared, and be refreshed, renewed and resouled.

A strand of thought in time continuing to unwind, for young friends and ageless ones, life's journeys joined, a long ago blessing and its hope:

And now my young friends, I wistfully bid you to come along. We shall walk among the reeds and rushes and somewhere along nature's path we shall find a pleasant place to rest. There is much work to be done though, and soon we must return, and soon we must return.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor