

Dear Chavraya,

There is a bittersweet moment implanted in each week's turning. It is a moment in which end and beginning are as one, a place from which it is hard to leave, yet called to leave, and yet to return. It is the moment and place of *Havdalah*, in word and purpose meaning *differentiation, distinction*, the moment of transition from Shabbos time to weekday time. Representing in its symbols, candle, wine, and spices, the light, the joy, the sweetness of Shabbos, it is in itself a beautiful moment. And yet..., so the bitterness that touches its sweetness, as *marror* on the Seder plate. In our gathering to mark that moment of beauty, taking up the symbols of light and delight, it means that Shabbos has ended. All the beauty of what has been in the embrace of Shabbos is ending. And that becomes part of the beauty and the challenge of Shabbos, to take some of the beauty with us into the days of the week, to infuse the ordinary with a taste of the holy, to see in the glow of the braided candle the holiness of the ordinary that we are about to enter.

As we come to *Motza'ei Shabbat / Going out of Shabbos* on Saturday night, it can take a little pushing from within, a little nudge, a word of encouragement from above and below, telling us to go on. If we don't lift our legs and go, then we shall never get to the place that is all Shabbos, never get to that Shabbat-infused time, *yom she'kulo Shabbos/the day that is all Shabbos*.

These are the dynamics in this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Vayetze* (Gen. 28:10-32:3). At the very beginning, following from the last portion, *Parashat Toldot*, Ya'akov is going out from Be'er Shava, fleeing the anger of his brother after having stolen the birthright. And so the portion opens, *vayetze ya'akov mi'be'er shava va'yelech charanah/and so ya'akov went out from be'er shava and went toward charan*. He is going out, but he has a goal, so as we enter the week, a near goal and a distant goal. *Vayetze ya'akov / and ya'akov went out...*, *vayetze* is the same root as *motza'ei*, one referring to Ya'akov's going out and the other to the going out of Shabbos, and therefore of our going out.

Through a profoundly beautiful teaching of the Slonimer Rebbe, we learn that indeed Ya'akov is also going out from Shabbos, if not from the day, then from its essential meaning as a place and time of wholeness. In *Parashat Toldot*, Ya'akov's father, Yitzchak, has made peace with the Philistine ruler, Avimelech. Six wells have been dug and named, and then a seventh. It is at the seventh that an oath is made between Yitzchak and Avimelech, an oath of peace. In the days of Avraham, Ya'akov's grandfather, who also made an oath of peace with Avimelech, the place of the oath is called *Be'er Shava/the Well of the Oath*. When Yitzchak makes an oath at the place of the seventh well, the spelling of the place is different than at the time of Avraham's oath. In regard to Yitzchak, that place of peace is called *Be'er Sheva/the Well of Seven*. That well becomes the culmination of all that has come before, all of the other six wells subsumed, as days of the week, and held within the meaning of the seventh. As of six wells, as of six days, all of our striving comes to fruition in the Seventh Well, *Be'er Sheva*, the well of Shabbos.

So the Slonimer teaches that the seven wells correspond to the six days of the week and Shabbos, *she'k'neged zeh hem sheshet y'mei ha'ma'se v'shabbat/corresponding to this, they are the six days of the week and Shabbos..., ha'shabbos kodesh ha'be'er ha'sh'vi'it/the Holy Shabbos is the seventh well....*

Of Ya'akov setting out on his journey, the Torah conveys how difficult it can be to leave the place of our lodging in peace, the place of home and wholeness. After he awakens from the first night of his journey, from the place of dreaming, of encountering God, we are told, *va'yisa ya'akov raglav/and ya'akov lifted up his feet*. He had to make himself leave, to push himself, to lift up his feet that they might carry him forward into the unknown. In the unfolding of his life, which is now made possible, it is always to return to the place of its beginning, and yet the place of beginning will never be as it was. At the beginning of his journey, as he goes out from the place of the seventh well, we are told, *va'yifga ba'makom/he encountered the place*. It is the physical place in which he finds himself, alone and afraid, and it is the Place that is with us in every place, God as *Ha'makom/the Place*.

Ya'akov's journey is our own. It is difficult to leave Shabbos, the place of the seventh well. It is the bittersweet nature of *Motza'ei Shabbos*, the time of going out, of Shabbos and of our selves. At the end of *Parashat Vayetze*, Ya'akov returns to the place, the place where he had encountered God. Enriched by the fullness of life as he has lived it, the seventh well is now even richer, deeper with the waters of life. So in our going out from Shabbos, we can only return to the coming Shabbos if we have gone out and journeyed through life, through the six days, drawing as we might from each of the six wells. As we approach this Shabbos, we are richer and fuller with life for all that we have drawn from the wells of the six days encountered since last Shabbos. As we enter this Shabbos and then go out from it, life renewed within ourselves and in the world, we bring a little bit closer the day that is all Shabbos. In our going out from Shabbos we come closer to its returning, to our returning. As Ya'akov went out and then returned, the cycle of life and its journeys, so have we. And now we are home.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor