

Dear Chavraya,

Shabbos *Shuva*, the Shabbos of turning, one of the specially named Shabbatot of the year, is the stopping point where we find ourselves coming to rest now on the journey through the Ten Days of Turning from Rosh Hashannah to Yom Kippur. This Shabbos is the week of the Torah portion *Ha'azinu*. It is the last Torah reading in the Shabbos cycle of readings, the final portion of the Torah to be read on Simchas Torah. The name Shabbos Shuvah comes from the Haftorah for this week, which begins with the words, *Shuvah Yisra'el ad Hashem Elokecha/Return, O, Israel, until God your God*. In the simple word *ad/until* is the encouragement needed to begin, start and you will go all the way until you get there, to the place of renewal, to God's embrace.

T'shuvah, the noun form of *shuvah*, involves a fascinating dynamic. Turn and return to the place where you missed a stitch and reweave, go back and make right, with yourself, with others, with God. We go back in order to go forward. Throughout these Days of Awe there is a tension between looking back and looking ahead. On the morning of the second day of Rosh Hashannah we wove a collective *d'rasha* together, a seeking and sharing from among us all. From those who were there wonderful insights were shared, some continuing to come in the days following Rosh Hashannah. I offer the starting point of the discussion here for those both present and not present as an opportunity for Shabbos reflection.

We began with a challenging statement made by Rebbe Tzadok of Lublin. He writes that *t'shuvah* is a "repair of the past/*hu tikkun ha'avar*." Elsewhere he writes of the power of Shabbos to repair all that transpired during the preceding week. *T'shuvah* is a process of making amends and turning from harmful behavior. But does it repair the past? It occurred to me after the wonderful discussion on Rosh Hashannah that initially I had read Rebbe Tzadok's words as though he said that *t'shuvah* has the power to change the past. Clearly, that is not possible, and that is what seems challenging and even off-putting in the teaching. In fact, all *t'shuvah* is about the past. Anything that we have done that we want to make amends for is in the past, or it may be an on-going conflict or behavior. In turning we acknowledge what we have done and what has been. We cannot change an event or take back hurtful words, but we can go back to the person hurt and bring healing words. We can go back to consider the effects of harmful behavior and strive to live in a different way. We cannot change the past, but we can work to repair the damage caused and experienced through prior events.

Shabbos is a vantage point from which to consider our actions and interactions of the past week. Pausing in order to reflect and then to draw from the insights of reflection, Shabbos offers a place from which to begin the process of repairing the rough edges of the week just past. *Shabbos Shuvah* offers that opportunity not only for the past week, but for the entire year. Looking backward from this Shabbos of Return, may we find the wisdom and the means to effect repair for events in the year just past, and then go forward refreshed and with greater wholeness through the gate of Yom Kippur.

Shabbat Shalom and *G'mar Chatimah Tovah/May we be sealed for good*,
Rabbi Victor