

בס"ד

שבת פרשת בהעלותך

ט' סיון תשע"ד

המקום יברך -- May the Place bless you in all your journeys, the One in Whose presence we are in every place we go. In the hand of the Holy One are the souls of the living and the dead, the near and the far. Joined with you when we are near, so shall we be when far apart. In the quest for home, so may you find it within yourself and in the company of those with whom you travel, in the company of those you meet, in the quiet prayers you pray in the presence of the Place.

לך לך -- לך לך..., so may you hear as Avram and Sarai did, setting forth upon two journeys in one, the way without and the way within, to discover self along the way to a far off land. From their first steps the journey of our people renewed and recapitulated through the journeys and the struggles within yourselves and in each one. Going home to the place of our people's beginnings, there in the very place of earth and sky as seen by Avram and Sarai, may you find home in the way you need it to be, in the way that will comfort you and tell you that you belong. Not simply to find but yours to create, home and belonging through the unique gifts you bring, a weave of diversity in all the ways we are a people. Do not be afraid.

May you not lose sight of beauty amidst all that would deny it, nor amidst the beauty lose sight of struggle and strife. May your hearts be big enough and spirits brave enough to hold it all, all the brokenness and all the wholeness. In the beauty of land, of trees and rocks and sand, may you see visions as the prophets did, calling for response in kind, swords turned to plowshares, each one to dwell beneath their vine and fig tree someday, all the people of Israel and of Palestine. May your learning inspire yearning, a depth of Torah like in no other place, but with it a question of so much pain, why such failure to heed its deepest call?

May you go out from the study hall and back again, from wall to wall to peer beyond, to bridge separations between Jews and Jews, between Arabs and Jews, gathering the tears of Hagar as of Rachel, each weeping for their children. Find hope in the deeds of those who strive for justice and peace, unbowed by despair, who sing of freedom and teach its song. Go out and learn Torah from them too, be they Muslim, Christian, or Jew. And may you not be afraid to laugh and to dance, to cry and to wail for all the beauty and all the pain that is life in the Land. May the Shechina's wings envelop you, Shabbos peace encompass you, holding each other close, as we hold you from afar, the Place blessing you in all your journeys as we send you with our love.

To the prayer that is each of you and each of yours, we say Amen v'Amen....