

Dear Chavraya,

In the waning light of day and of the week as it wends its way home to Shabbos, I think of light in all of its hues, of sparkling brilliance and muted softness. This week's Torah portion, *Parashat T'tzaveh*, opens with a mitzvah to raise up light. It is a mitzvah given to Moses, yet Moses is told to call on us, for we the people are the ones to bring the pure olive oil for the lighting. That light is to be raised up continually is a statute for all time and for each generation, *chukat olam l'dorotam/an eternal statute for the generations*. The wording becomes further emphasis that it is indeed about us, the people of each generation in the unfolding of the Jewish people. It is not enough to simply speak of an eternal statute, clearly meaning forever, but each generation needs to be mentioned, reminded that we each have our part in the unfolding of time, the raising of light.

In the very word for the raising of light is the essential teaching, that each one is needed. In regard to the menorah that stood in the desert sanctuary, the *Mishkan*, and later in the temples in Jerusalem, the Torah doesn't use the usual word for *kindling light/l'hadlik*, as in the lighting of Shabbos candles, *l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat*. In regard to the menorah, the Torah says, *l'ha'alot ner tamid/to make light spring up continually*. It is the way of lighting one wick with a pre-existing flame, as in the lighting of Chanukkah candles from a *shammes*. It is a mesmerizing moment, when holding the flame of one candle to the wick of another, and suddenly as with a woosh, two flames rise together as one, higher and brighter than either by itself. And when the *shammes* is removed both candles continue to gently give of their light, shimmering in the darkness. It becomes a model for teaching and learning, student and teacher. The teacher, each one of us at one time or another, gives of learning to the student, also each one of us at one time or another, and the giver of knowledge is not diminished, each continuing to give of their own light. Each one is needed in the transmission of light and learning, and then the giver of light steps aside, still glowing in its remove.

It is the way of *Parashat T'tzaveh*, *Moshe Rabbeinu/Moses our Teacher* gives of his light and then steps back. He is still very much among us at this point in our journey through the yearly cycle of Torah, the desert journey having barely begun. And yet, with this parsha we are prepared for a future reality that is as sure as day's turning to night, of light fading gently into darkness. *T'tzaveh* is the only Torah portion in which Moses' name is not mentioned. He is very present and yet neither speaking to us nor spoken of by name. God calls to Moses at the opening of the portion, but not by name, only with the second person pronoun, a pronoun with the little word "and," but one letter in Hebrew, the letter *vav* attached, *v'atah/and you....* There is something touching in the silent simplicity of God's loving call. *And you....*, I imagine God, if we can so speak, to be calling softly, just loud enough to catch Moses' ear, perhaps voice rising in a touch of sing song, a bit of a nigan..., *aaand youuu....*

Much is made of that little *vav*, not needed for its meaning in either Hebrew or English. The Me'or Eynayim, Rebbe Menachem Nachum of Tchernobyl, makes much of that *vav*, teaching that it is not about Moses, but about us, each in relation to the other, joined as a community, and all together joined with our teacher. It is a reminder of connection, of presence even in absence. The Me'or

Eynayim teaches of the word *t'tzaveh*, *lashon tzavta v'chibur*/it is the language of fellowship and connection.

That becomes the teaching that we are to hold, the teaching that rises as the flame upon a new wick, rising as one in a brief moment in time with the enkindling light of another. It is a teaching that is meant to be for the week of *Parashat T'tzaveh*. Always the portion that precedes Purim, it is the portion that frames the week in which we come to the seventh day in the Hebrew month of Adar. The seventh of Adar is one of the quietly holy days in the Jewish calendar, both the *yahrzeit* and birth date of Moshe Rabbeinu, the entire cycle of life held in the embrace of one day. Moses is not with us, and yet he is present when we are joined with each other, whenever we learn together the teaching of Moses, the *Torat Moshe*. *T'tzaveh* is also the birth portion of my mother, of blessed memory, the light of her soul as an eternal light continuing to give of its learning, continuing to raise up the light of my soul.

Holding the memory of these two teachers, the light of their souls illuminating my path, we learn the way of raising up light, each of us the teacher and the student, each of us the *enkindling shammes* and each of us the new wick awaiting the touch of another's shimmering light. So we learn of presence and absence, and of the abiding light of a loved one's soul.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor