

Dear Chavraya,

I hope that all are well. Mieke and I have just arrived home and are quickly getting ready for Shabbos. With but a moment now and sleepy, I want to wish you a good Shabbos, a peaceful Shabbos, a Shabbos of renewal and perspective as we approach Tisha B'Av. The Slonimer Rebbe teaches of the importance of finding joy on this Shabbos, even, especially on this day that is the gate into the sorrows recounted and relived on Tisha B'Av, day of mourning and fasting for so many sorrows. This Shabbos is in fact itself the ninth of Av, thus it is Tisha B'Av. The rabbis taught long ago that there is to be no public display of mourning on Shabbos, neither personal nor public. The observance of the fast is postponed, therefore, and begins with the end of Shabbos and continues through Sunday. In the Slonimer's teaching we are reminded to feel Shabbos joy even on this Shabbos, that it might offer a thread of hope to take with us into the places of despair encountered when we leave Shabbos. It is the same expression of hope that the rabbis offered in teaching that the *Mashiach/Messiah* would be born on Tisha B'Av, seeds of hope planted in the midst of despair.

This Shabbos of *Parashat D'varim* is called *Shabbat Chazon/Shabbos of Vision*, from the Haftorah of Isaiah that begins with the word *Chazon/Vision*. The challenge is in the nature of the vision we shall behold, whether one of hope or despair. With so much in the world around us to overwhelm us with despair, we are called to enter Tisha B'Av with our eyes open to all that is destroying our world, that is eating away at human decency, that is destroying lives, that is undermining justice and making a mockery of democratic values in this country and in Israel. And yet, it is Shabbos, a reminder of what can be, of what the world is meant to be, and we are to find joy in that awareness, to breath, to feel the breeze of hope, planting its seeds in the furrows of our hearts. Taking the Slonimer's teaching to heart, I acknowledge the blessing of his memory on this Shabbos of Vision, the day after his eighteenth *yahrzeit*.

As we seek hope together in the midst of despair, please join us for the chanting of *Eicha/Lamentations* tomorrow night, Saturday, July 21st at 9:10 P.M. as we enter Tisha B'Av together. For now, find that upon which to smile....

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor