

Dear Chavraya,

In the midst of so much wonderful emotion, Mieke and I are in Brooklyn, New York for our youngest daughter's wedding on Sunday. This morning I ran along the East River, drawn to the flow of time and all that it carries. High above, the Brooklyn Bridge spanned the current, joining shores and the people making their way between. Down river, giving me pause in which to take in her silent silhouette in the early morning light, the Statue of Liberty keeping vigil for all that is good and right.

I have thought of that bridge and of that statue in approaching the wedding, of people joined one to another, love as the bridge. I have thought of love flowing out into the world, softening the rough edges, reminding of how we are meant to be. The Slonimer Rebbe offers a beautiful teaching on love's way of touching the world around us with all of its fragile hope and possibility. Just before the breaking of the glass, a reminder of brokenness, I often share the Slonimer's words: *Love brings near the redemption and brings the great repair/ahavah m'karevet et ha'ge'ulah u'me'vi'ah l'tikun ha'gamur.*

Most of all, I am filled with emotion so close to the surface, so many times of life and places and people, so much carried on the current, all bridged now in one moment of love's embrace. In the turning of time we return to familiar places. As shall be the day of her wedding, Tzvia's welcome into the covenant of our people was on Rosh Chodesh Elul, a month of turning and ever returning, its own blessing for our *chossen-kallah*, and so for all of us. As we welcomed Tzvia into the covenant at the end of Shabbos, the words of *Parashat Re'eh* still hovered in the air, the portion that had been read that day. So *Parashat Re'eh* is this week's Torah portion, its words offering a portal to the wedding, and from the *chuppah* into life unfolding, as it offered a way of entry of our people into the land. The portion opens with the offering of a choice and the encouraging hope of the way we shall go: *re'eh anochi noten lifnei'chem ha'yom b'racha u'k'lalah/See! I set before you today blessing and curse* (Deut. 11:26).

As the portion continues, and so life itself, emphasis is on blessing. Without a conditional word, as there shall later be in regard to the way of curse, the Holy One offers the hope that of course we shall choose the way of blessing. That is our hope as we stand in the gateway of Elul, the path of renewal before us and before our beloved couple. In the word *Re'eh!* itself is a word of reminder for all of us as we make our way the way of blessing. *Re'eh/See!* is a call to open our eyes and take in the beauty of the world in spite of all that would deny it. That is the beginning of the way of blessing, to see, to take in and hold with love all the possibility of what it means to be in this world.

I have long felt a personal attachment to this Torah portion and its signature theme as held in the one simple word that is its name. *Re'eh* is the acronym by which I often see and sign my own name, *Resh Aleph Hey* as *Rabbi Avigdor Hillel*. It is the way of my mother's magnifying glass and my father's microscope, a call to *See!*, to really see, to open our eyes to all of life's possibilities, to see the beauty in the smallest worlds and the grand.

As life flows beneath the Bridge that joins us all, love bringing near the great repair, the way of blessing begins in the opening of hearts and eyes. As Tzvia and Jacob look into each other's eyes, *R'eah!*, love's teaching for each of us, the way of a softer, gentler world, blessings upon them and upon us all, Amen v' Amen.

Shabbat shalom,  
Rabbi Victor