

Dear Chavraya,

As we approach this weekend of remembering Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., it has also been a week of remembering his friend and partner for justice, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Rabbi Heschel's forty-seventh *yohrzeit* was this week. It is in this confluence of two great souls, that Professor Susannah Heschel will speak tomorrow night, offering reflections on her father and his friendship with Rev. King.

I first met Susannah in Jerusalem at around the time of her father's third *yohrzeit*, helping then to arrange an egalitarian minyan for her to have a place to say Kaddish. At a time of remembrance, there is something fitting to gather in the soulful setting of a *Melaveh Malkah*. *Accompanying the Queen*, the words speak to our gathering as a way of offering escort to the Shabbos Queen as she leaves. So too, with the uplift of song and presence we part with our additional soul, the *neshoma y'serah* that comes to us with the arrival of each Shabbos. Most importantly, with a *Melaveh Malkah* we draw together all of the hope that comes with Shabbos for a world of peace, allowing that hope to infuse our first steps into the week. In that way, the *Melaveh Malkah* is called *se'udoso d'dovid malkah m'shicha/the meal of David, king Messiah*. Through our gathering, we look ahead to the time of the M'shi'ach/Messiah, time of complete peace and harmony in the world, to the day that is all Shabbos peace.

On this Shabbos of *Parashat Sh'mot*, the seeds of Israel's redemption are planted, and so the seeds of human redemption. The slavery has begun and simultaneously the path to liberation. That the possibility of liberation is found in the very midst of oppression becomes its own expression of hope. In their first encounter with Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron say for the first time, *shalach et ami/let my people go*. Rabbi Heschel calls that encounter "the first conference on religion and race..." of which he then says: "The outcome of that summit meeting has not come to an end. Pharaoh is not ready to capitulate. The exodus began, but is far from having been completed.... Let us dodge no issues. Let us yield no inch to bigotry, let us make no compromise with callousness..." (The Insecurity of Freedom, p. 85).

In the way of a *yohrzeit*, looking back through generations, weaving legacies, Rabbi Heschel's ancestor, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apta, known as the *Ohev Yisrael/Lover of Israel*, offers teaching whose spirit finds its way through the generations, echoing in the teaching of our Rabbi Heschel. The Apta writes, *True unity/ha'achdut ha'amiti is for the good of God's creatures, created and ordered through all of creation, and which for their sake flows through all of the worlds, in order to bring out this thought [of complete unity] from the potential to the real....*

This is the hope of a *Melaveh Malkah*, to bring the hope of Shabbos peace throughout the world from the potential to the real. In remembering Rev. Martin Luther King and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, may the inspiration of their lives and work help us to bring *yom she'kulo shabbos/the day that is all Shabbos*.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor