

Dear Chavraya,

Approaching this Shabbos, I am filled with feelings of connection, with moments in time and with the people that are part of each moment. With little time now, I share only my gratitude for the life connections given to me. I am grateful to you and this community. I am grateful to the community that I was part of as rabbi in Victoria, British Columbia. Through the years, I have had a hard time making a connection between my earlier years as rabbi and young father and husband in Victoria and my later years as rabbi, older father and husband in Boston. The years in Victoria were very full and beautiful. The *Nehar Shalom* years have been very full and beautiful. The sorrows of life that have come during each of these periods of my life have been held in the warmth of a caring community, and so too the sharing of life's joys. Not surprising, the two communities have much in common, a continent apart and yet so close.

During my visit to Victoria to speak at a conference called "Defying Hatred," I found connection with an earlier part of my life. I realized that the lack of connection I have felt through the years has been my own doing, my own closing off of a part of myself. Coming through many life changes, some of great pain, it seemed easier to just move on. With the life-partner who came into my life in Boston, I am filled with gratitude that Mieke accompanied me on this journey, creating our own connection with people and place, a connection that is now ours. I realized, as well, that connections long dormant are able to emerge into light with all the certainty and hope of the new moon's emerging crescent.

That is a message carried in this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Bo*, the emerging moon to be our marker in time, telling of change and renewal. The mitzvah to mark Rosh Chodesh, the new moon, is given in this portion while our people are still in Egypt, a reminder that when we are yet in a narrow place, hope beckons if we would but look up. From simple words we learn two *mitzvot*, that the new moon is to be sighted visually, requiring us, indeed, to look up, and that the month of Nisan, the month of our liberation, is to be the first month of the year. Filled with a sense of renewal, of that which is *new/chadash*, the Torah calls out with hope, *ha'chodesh ha'zeh lachem rosh chodashim.../this renewal of the moon shall be for you a beginning of new moons...* (Ex. 12:2).

On these words, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch teaches of God's reaching out beyond the words of Torah, "Even as the moon renews itself by the laws of nature, so you, too, should renew yourselves, but by your own free will.... And as I renew you and you renew yourselves..., wherever you go, proclaim the message of *chidush/renewal...*" In Victoria for the Shabbos of blessing the new moon, I felt that renewal. In my return to Boston and to *Nehar Shalom*, to you, so too I felt that renewal, a connection in time and space, long elusive, emerging with all the hope of the new moon's emerging crescent.

Shabbat shalom,  
Rabbi Victor