

Dear Chavraya,

How do we share that which resides most deeply in the sanctuary of our own heart? How do we share that for which our heart most yearns, and with whom to share? It may be the stuff of what is shared primarily with a therapist, or, if we are so blessed, with a trusted friend, perhaps with a lover and partner. It can be hard to speak of, awkward even to wonder, if we might share with God our deepest intimacies, hopes and fears, the yearnings through the years. Before we can even share with God, we need to first be able to share with the one who may even be the hardest to share with, our own self. It can be hard to acknowledge unfulfilled hopes, dreams we yet seek to know in the waking of our life's days. As the seasons of life turn, our dreams turn, and still we follow, seeking to know who we are when we are no longer just who we were in the times that came before.

Unable to comprehend or imagine the light that would illumine the holy space of communal gathering, and the holy space of each one's soul, Moses struggled with the commandment to create the menorah that would illumine the desert sanctuary. In this week's Torah portion, *Parashat T'rumah* (Ex. 25:1-27:19), Moses speaks God's call to build the sanctuary, *v'asu li mikdash v'shochanti b'tocham/make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them*. All of the ritual items to be used in the sanctuary are then described, all to be fashioned from the gifts that the people freely bring as offerings of the heart, *m'et kol ish asher yidvenu libo/from each person whose heart moves them to make a free-will gift....*

There are three things that rabbinic tradition teaches confused Moses, three things that he could not understand how to fashion or fulfill as a mitzvah. Two have come earlier in the Torah, the half shekel that was to be given at the start of the month of Adar, of which we read last Shabbos. The second was the mitzvah called *Ha'chodesh/the new moon*, the marking of Rosh Chodesh with a visual sighting of the new moon's emerging crescent. The third mitzvah that confounded Moses comes in *Parashat T'rumah*, the building from one piece of gold the menorah that would illumine the sanctuary. In the holy Zohar, with words of great warmth, Moses is asked, *why is this difficult for you/amai it'ka'shey lach?* The three mitzvot that are difficult for Moses to visualize are shown to him. In other midrashic sources we are told that Moses is shown heavenly patterns formed of fire to illustrate the template to be followed on earth. In the Zohar, Moses is told that the three items so hard for him to perceive are represented by the letters of his own name, **M'norah**, **SH'kalim**, **Ha'chodesh**, the letters that spell **MoSheH**.

It is through Moses' own name, his own being, that he is finally able to perceive that which he could not see without first knowing himself. He is able to look out into the world most clearly once he is able to look within himself, to acknowledge and say who he is as Moshe. Each of the things that Moses could not understand represents the yearnings that touch the hearts of most of us. The *menorah* represents light upon the path, light that illumines the sacred spaces of our gathering with others and the deepest places in our own heart. The half *shekel* that each one is to give tells of relationship and belonging, of community as the place in which we become whole through that which another brings, a reminder

that each one brings their own gift to the wholeness of community and self, a reminder that we need each other. The emerging crescent of the new moon, *ha'chodesh*, is an ever-renewing teaching of hope, that whatever the darkness through which we walk, whatever the confusion and troubles we face, new light shall yet emerge.

In the same way that Moses sought to understand that which he was called to do and to make of and within his life, so are we all faced with the same question at the outset of *Parashat T'rumah*. We are told that the commandment to build the *mishkan* is an eternal commandment, and yet how are we to fulfill such a mitzvah, how to make the sanctuary? The Slonimer Rebbe and others point out the obvious, that if the *mitzvah* is to build the sanctuary then once it had been completed, even once the great Temple in Jerusalem had been built, then the mitzvah to build could no longer be fulfilled. The Slonimer Rebbe then offers the most beautiful way that we are each able to fulfill the mitzvah of building a sanctuary to God, showing us in the way that Moses had been shown, through the lens of our own being if we are willing to look most deeply within:

Every person has specific matters for which their heart most yearns. One should give over that special matter of their heart's yearning as an offering to HaShem.... Just as each person comes down to this world to repair matters unique to them, so in every season of one's life that which a person needs to repair changes. It is the matter of one's greatest yearning in the present moment that one gives over to God, and in this way builds an inner sanctuary.

We do our best to create within ourselves a place of refuge from which to draw strength, an inner well that we carry with us on the way to repair, living waters replenished at times with our tears. Rather than trying to leave sorrows behind or making futile effort to ignore, we acknowledge their presence as part of our being; and of our being in relationship, with God, with ourselves, with others, with life itself. As Moses could only understand the world around and his place in it by looking through the lens of his own being, so may we look deeply within, able then to see more clearly the world all around. With all the courage it takes to live life fully, may we look within and acknowledge to ourselves our heart's deepest yearnings, then to give them over to God as our heart's greatest gifts, the *t'rumah* with which to build a sanctuary in each season of our lives.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor