



Shofar Calls and Spiritual Stirrings ***Torah Reflections on Parashat Pinhas***

Numbers 25:10 - 30:1

14 Tammuz 5774

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In the Torah portion *Pinhas* we read that we are to observe a sacred occasion that "shall be a day of shofar-sounding for you" (Numbers 29:1). We all know the momentous stirring that somehow, in a wordless way, opens something deep inside us as soon as we hear the sound of the shofar (ram's horn). We know that we are called to some great personal self-reflection in the midst of community. And we all know that we are called to a self-reflection that hopes for change.

There really is nothing like the blast of the shofar. But, like all the ways in which our tradition invites us to understand the symbols and metaphors in Jewish life, we also experience other "shofar-sounds" that heighten our attention, stimulate our thoughts, and bring us to a place of great tenderness.

How many times when we are ill, for example, do we find ourselves reflecting on our lives in a way we did not when we were well? And how well we know that when we are ill, our reflections take on a different cast. Somehow the vulnerability of illness brings its own lens with which we see the world and ourselves. We may suddenly find ourselves praying in a different way--or praying for the first time. We find ourselves speaking differently, feeling differently, or even acting differently. All because illness has sounded a kind of shofar-call to pay attention differently.

What are the ways in which the shofar's sound has come into your life? And what are the ways in which the reflection it stimulated brought you to a place of deeper relationship, broader awareness, or determined action?

There are many ways in which one can understand the spiritual experience in illness. One way is to consider that illness itself is not necessarily spiritual; rather how one reacts to illness can be. In this way, our acts of self-reflection – something available to us all no matter our station in life -- can become an important daily discipline which continues to move us more

deeply into our God-created selves, and in relationship to others around us.

The shofar may sound literally or metaphorically, taking us to a place of tenderness - but what we do once we get there is the stuff of spiritual life.

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This Torah Reflection was written by Rabbi Eric Weiss, President and CEO of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center in San Francisco. The Torah Reflections series is published by the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center, a beneficiary of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. More information and healing-oriented resources can be found at www.JewishHealingCenter.org.



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- Rabbinic care, chaplaincy, counseling and spiritual direction—at home or in hospitals, hospices, nursing homes or other care facilities
- Spiritual support groups for patients, caregivers, and the bereaved
- Healing and memorial services, and specialized rituals

Whether through prayer, study materials, or simply a listening presence, the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center is here to support you during difficult times.
