



Torah Reflections for *Parashat Ha'azinu and Rosh HaShanah*

Deuteronomy 32:1-52

We read in Bereshit (Genesis 1:2), in the Story of Creation, *ruah elohim mirahefet al p'nei ha-mayim*. This is typically translated as: “a wind from God hovered (or swept) over the face of the water”. The word that is translated as hovered or swept is *mirahēfet*. *Mirahēfet* is a word of ancient Hebrew poetry. It is rarely found in Torah, but we do read it in Deuteronomy (32:11) where *mirahēfet* refers to a mother eagle beating her wings in place, over the nest of her young, in order to feed them. And so I translate *mirahēfet* as “fluttering”. So that *ruah elohim mirahefet al p'nei ha-mayim* is better understood as “a wind from God fluttered over the face of the water.”

Because each of us is created *b'tzelem elohim*, in the unique image of God, each of us has our own deep and internal *mirahēfet*; our own spiritual fluttering. All spiritual yearning begins in the wordless flutterings/*mirahēfet* of our souls. Because *mirahēfet* at its core is wordless, no matter what language we speak, we spend our lives trying to attach words to our own deep internal spiritual fluttering.

Communally, as we approach every New Year we both celebrate the beginning of the new year and review the past. Yet individually, depending on our current physical, emotional, or spiritual state, we may look forward to the fullness of this coming year or we may not. We may look at the past year as filled with promise or we may not. Certainly there are some years we have looked forward to and some years we were glad to end.

No matter what our framework for any particular year, we are always filled with wordless yearning, *mirahēfet*, that flutters in us and seeks to be articulated. Part of our spiritual task at any time, and certainly at the turn of the new year, is to listen to the *mirahēfet* that soul-flutters, to pay attention to its own unique patterns in each of us, to

attempt to give it expression, and allow words -- as best they can -- to settle in so that we can let ourselves and others know the wisdom that our spiritual flutterings can give.

May this New Year give us enriching spiritual flutterings.

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2530 Taraval Street, Suite 202, San Francisco, CA 94116
(415) 750-4197 □ www.jewishhealingcenter.org