

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pride Shabbat  
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Shabbat Shalom and Happy Pride!

This is our second annual pride Shabbat. Why is it important for us to acknowledge this day? Does the commemoration of struggles and the celebration of GLBT people have any special resonance for us as Jews? Do we as members of TBZ have a reason to acknowledge this secular holiday?

In preparing for this, my first d'var, I looked to the parshat of this week, B'ha Alot' Kha and just in these five chapters of Torah there were many stories that held relevance for this day –a journey with many stops and starts, the importance of more than one leader when a community is struggling/complaining and most literally, at the end of the portion the complaint about the wrong kind of marriage. I want to focus today however on the beginning of Chapter 10 when G-d tells Moses to fashion two silver trumpets, made of hammered work. In verse 8 we read, “These trumpets shall be blown by Aaron’s sons, the priests; they shall be an institution for all time throughout the ages”. We learn that these trumpets are sounded to mark the beginning of a journey, call specific tribes and groups together, signal the attack of an aggressor and herald a joyous occasion. I want to talk about how we might want to sound these trumpets today in the context of our civil rights struggles in the GLBT community.

The beginning of a journey is often hard to mark, but we can imagine one sounding of the trumpet of assembly during the struggle that happened in Greenwich Village 42 years ago, when a disenfranchised community came together and began to fight their oppression. These events unfolded in a bar frequented by drag queens and they were the first group to be called to action. In the 42 years that followed, however, we have learned a lot about how broad our interests are as a community. Moses learned how to sound the call for the divisions of Judah, Reuben and Ephraim. We in the Jewish community are trying to learn the call of our common ground of the Torah, the tree in which all our branches of belief and interpretation emerge. The Gay community is learning how to call on the many different groups oppressed by ideology about gender and sexual norms. Our “trumpet calls” are letters, initials.

First, there was ‘G’. When Julie and I were a young lesbian couple living in Dallas, TX, I became a volunteer at the Gay Alliance. As hard as it is to believe now, in 1990 there was a long debate about whether to add the letter ‘L’. We lost. ‘G’ was to all there was, the rest of us were implicit. Now decades later there is an understanding that it is not enough to sound one trumpet, we must all be called in a unique way, from our sometimes separate tribes to stand together. As an almost 50 year old lesbian, co-chairing the GLBT committee, I have found that even more letters are not needed, Q for Queer and A for our Allies, straight and gay.

The third use of the trumpets is to sound when you are “at war in a land against an aggressor who attacks you”. Sadly, this is a trumpet that we still need today in the gay community. We sound this trumpet of alarm when we are bullied and when young people are driven by self-hatred and despair to suicide. We sound this alarm when those of us who are transgendered are denied their civil rights. We sound this alarm when we must fight to gain or, thankfully for some of us, preserve our right to marry.

The trumpet we sound today, however, is the trumpet of celebration and thanksgiving. We seek to remember now and at all times where we have come from and what we have gained. In the parshat this week, the Israelites, freed from slavery and fed manna each day with an extra portion on Shabbat, forget to be grateful for what G-d has given them. Instead of thanking G-d for what they have escaped and what they have been given and trusting G-d for what lies ahead of them, they complain about what they lack, the food they long for from their days in Egypt. G-d is harsh with them and Moses is exhausted by them. Why can they not trust?

I must say, as obnoxious as they are in their complaints, I feel some sympathy with them, this people with a traumatic past and a tranquil but uncertain future. I can imagine that trust was very hard to come by. I think of our young people on their journey out of the slavery of high school, enduring the cruelty of their peers and then emerging perhaps intact but with no idea what their future holds. As a community we need to all come together, not just one leader, even Moses was exhausted by the weight of fear and uncertainty, but 70 of us, 700 of us to lead the way. “It gets better” we must say to them, those of us lucky enough to have reached the promised land, lucky enough to love and be loved, lucky to be safe, lucky to have both our manna and our meat.

I want to return once more to the imagery of the trumpet calls and call out to each of you. Let us stand up now, ready for our march tomorrow, whether we will be there in actuality or in spirit. I am going to use my trumpet and call to each of you, please stand as you hear your unique call. ‘G’ ‘L’ ‘B’ ‘T’ ‘Q’ ‘A’.

Shabbat Shalom.