A Wake Up Call - A Kavanah for Shofar
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Second day of Rosh Hashanah 5774

Ashrei Ha’am yod’ei T’ruah, says the Psalmist- Happy is the people that knows the sound of T’ruah- the sound of the shofar.
Adonai b’or panekha y’halekun – they walk in the light of your divine presence.

What does it mean to know the sound of the shofar?
The Hassidic Master known as Degel Machaneh Ephraim teaches that knowing the t’ruah means allowing our hearts to be shattered, in order to open ourselves to the light of the divine presence.

In the words of our teacher Rabbi Art Green: “The shofar sound represents prayer beyond words, an intensity of longing that can be articulated only in a wordless shout. But the order of the sounds, according to one old interpretation, contains the message in quite explicit terms. Each series of shofar blasts begins with teki’ah, a whole sound. It is followed by shevarim, a tripartite broken sound whose very name means “breakings.” “I started off whole,” the shofar speech says, “and I became broken.” Then follows a teru’ah, a staccato series of blast fragments, saying: “I was entirely smashed to pieces.” But each series has to end with a new teki’ah, promising wholeness once more”. (Seek My Face, Page 169).

For these last set of shofar blasts, as we recite the verses on Malchuyot, Zichronot and Shofarot, I would like to invite us to hear the t’ruah- the call of the shofar as a wake up call to that promise of wholeness. A wake up call for that, that is broken in the world and needs tikkun, repair. A wake up call to take action to build a just world; a world to walk in the light of God’s divine presence.
In a few moments and before each shofar calling I will bring our awareness to an issue that needs our attention. On Rosh Hashanah we look at our own lives, at the choices we make as individuals, at our relationships, at the new possibilities that life can bring to us. But we ought to do so, by looking also at our place in the world and our responsibility to create a better world. The shofar is a wake up call to act in this world, to not sit silent in the face of injustice. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Shneerson teaches us: “If you see what needs to be repaired and how to repair it, then you have found a piece of the world that God has left for you to complete. But if you only see what is wrong and what is ugly in the world, then it is you yourself that needs repair.”

I invite us to hear the shofar as a call to us to care and to look for those pieces of the world that God has left for us to complete.

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As we rise to hear the shofar of Malchuyot, I invite us to remember the violence that tears apart our communities. The violence that takes life daily on the streets of Boston and other big cities in the United States. The violence that has again and again taken the lives of children in our schools. The violence in our homes directed against women, children, and men. The violence that constantly flows off the screens of our movie theaters, televisions and computers.

Let us hear the call of the shofar reconnecting us to the deep inner place where we know that we cannot accept that "this is just how things are". Let us remember how precious every life is and dare to hear that call.

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As we rise to hear the *shofar* of Zichronot, I invite us to remember the violence we are more remotely connected to through the actions of our government, our diplomacy, our media, and through our connection to the entire human race. Even as we and our government struggle to discern the right course of action let us remember the human suffering of 100,000 casualties and many more families and refugees in Syria. The victims of the uprisings in Egypt and of the drug wars in Mexico. The ongoing suffering in Israel and Palestine and every other place torn by war and strife.

Let us put aside for one moment our disagreements about intervention and blame and responsibility and listen to the call of the *shofar* reminding us of the common humanity behind all the seemingly unsolvable arguments.

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As we rise to hear the *shofar* of Shofarot, take a few moments to reflect on the call you personally need to hear. What is it that you need to be reminded of, what in the world is calling out to you not to be ignored?

What will you let the call of the *shofar* take to your innermost, most vulnerable places?