THE SHOFAR CALLS

The Talmud tells us, the blasts of the shofar are meant to remind us of crying, (Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 33A). In other texts the shofar blasts that herald the coming of the New Year are sounded as a trumpet to rally the Jewish people for battle. A battle with our own failings and to assemble us together as a community to defend against impending danger. This year it is most certainly all of those things.

In the blast I hear the cry of the families of the fallen, the murdered, the displaced and those held hostage. I hear the cry of our people against the double standards, the antisemitism, the moral equivalency. The warning of the violence and threats of violence that are allowed to increase in volume and intensity across Canada without effective response from our political leaders and institutional leaders.

In the shofar blasts I hear the cry of our people who are pained and shattered by the loss of innocent lives in Gaza, soul crushing moral pain that is the very objective of a terrorist organization that hides beneath their own civilians as they continue to murder Israelis.

The staccato pleading of the shofar, piercing the heart again and again with each new rocket attack on the North. Unceasingly they go on and on without end, as though they will never run out of missles, the Baal Tikyah, will never run out of breath. It's inhuman, it's exhausting, and yet it's undeniable.

And in the shofar I hear a rallying call, "Jews and allies come, come together" I imagine that there will be more "Jews in the pews" these High Holy Days than anytime since perhaps the Yom Kippur War. We are called to each other, "*Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh* / all of Israel are responsible for each other" (Talmud, Shevuot 39a). Just as we have shown up at rallies and online and in public and private conversations, we will show up in shul. Where else would a Jew be on such a day, at such a time? There is something tribal and fundamental about the yearning to be with *Am Yisrael*. It strengthens and inspires me. We need each other, your *Klay Kodesh* need to see you, hear you in shul this year.

And the shofar begs us to look inward to examine our souls, *Heshbone HaNefesh*, to account for our actions and inactions. We are commanded to do that every year, but this year there is a deeper context. Have we listened to views and perspectives that are uncomfortable for us? Have we been curious or closed off? Have we withheld judgment or been judgmental? When we list the communal sins of the Al Heyt will we hear an echo of our own culpability in the responsive readings?

The rabbis debate if a deaf person can fulfill the mitzvah of the shofar if they cannot actually hear it? An answer is that one does not hear the shofar with their ears, they hear it with their soul, their *n'shamah*, the essence of their being. Hear the call of the shofar this year, deep in your soul, and cry out loudly, proudly, mournfully, prayerfully, hopefully. Do not be silent. It's calling all of us.