

The shofar blast is a wake-up call, stirring something in us, calling us to attention or at least to get out of bed, drawing us out of our regular routine toward something sacred.

Every year, I promise to “get up early”, to arouse myself during Elul, and to arrive to the shofar blast alert and present. But every year....it’s as if I am taken by surprise... it’s “that time of year” again?”

I find myself in the middle of the days of awe in the unraveled unmindful equivalent of arriving in a bathrobe and teeth unbrushed. I hear the shofar blast as if from underwater. I’m trying to wake up, to be mindful and connect. I’m yearning, but can’t quite open my eyes.

I want to share a rather dramatic “waking up” metaphor from my experience as a physical therapist. Early in my career, I worked with young adults with head injuries. They came to us medically stable, but comatose. Doctors come in their room, twist the skin on their feet and look for a pain response, a good sign.

I’m thinking of one client in particular, I’ll call Jake. Jake didn’t respond to deep pain. I talked continually... “I’m touching your arm now, feel your arm?” We would take him through the motions: rolling across the gym floor, sitting on the side of the bed rocking back and forth... looking to elicit primitive reflexes. We would get him on a tilt table and stand him up, or put him in a sling and rock him back and forth, take him out in a wheel chair, letting the light flash through the trees on his eyes. “Jake, can you feel that? That’s the wind” We put different smells under Jake’s nose, earbuds in his ears with music, and my favorite, ice cream on his lips.

One day, I was working with Jake and his eyes connected with mine and remained there. I stopped, in awe. “There you are”, I said. And, “I will fight for you.” Of course everyone was ecstatic when he established a yes/no with a hand squeeze. That meant communication and relationship.

Years later, maybe 5 years, in San Rafael, I saw a biker dude in a wheelchair and we started a conversation. We talked for quite a while about different subjects, and before we parted, he told me his name. “Jake! I am your physical therapist!” It was like a reunion with a lost child. It was an emotional moment for me.

So, maybe at this shofar blast, you will have your reunion. It is an appointed time, after all. Or maybe you will connect for the first time and say like David did in tehillim: “When I awake, I will see Your face, and be satisfied...” Or just join us and simply go through the motions because the motions have a deep and spiritual wake up value. If you find yourself here half asleep, unprepared and in your pajamas spiritually but in some settings, that is considered very high functioning.

Can you feel it? It’s the ruah. Hear the shofar. Let the light on your eyes, the music in your ears, let the words on your mouth get down to your soul, like ice cream on your lips... taste and see that the Lord is good. Let the love in. Hag semeach.