

Tishrei 2, 5753
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PHILLIP BERNSTEIN

THE SHOFAR WE SOUNDED ON ROSH HASHANAH AS THE CENTER OF OUR WORSHIP SERVICE IS MADE UP OF THREE DIFFERENT SOUNDS: THE TEKIAH - A SINGLE LONG BLAST; THE SHEVARIM - THREE SHORTER SOUNDS, AND THE TERUAH - A STACCATO SERIES OF QUICK BLASTS. THERE ARE MANY TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THESE SOUNDS. THE TEKIAH, UNBROKEN AND STRAIGHT, DENOTES THAT THE SOUL WAS CREATED PURE AND STRAIGHT.

THE SHEVARIM, WITH ITS THREE MEDIUM LENGTH BLASTS, DENOTES FRAGMENTATION. THE SOUL, BORN PURE, IS FRAGMENTED WHEN WE REACH MATURITY AND SOMETIMES STRAY FROM OUR SOUL'S PERFECTION. THE SHEVARIM STILL LEAVES HOPE THAT THE THREE BLASTS CAN BE UNITED - THAT LIFE CAN BE ONCE AGAIN MADE WHOLE.

THEN WE HAVE THE TERUAH, WITH ITS SERIES OF SHORT BLASTS REPRESENTING THE SOUND OF SOBBING. THE TERUAH REMINDS US OF THE GRIEF AND PAIN THAT ALL OF US EXPERIENCE.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF ROSH HASHANAH, MARVIN MITCHELL, ONE OF OUR SHOFAR BLOWERS, WENT TO GREY NUNS HOSPITAL TO BLOW THE SHOFAR AT PHIL BERNSTEIN'S BEDSIDE.

THE WEEPING SOUND OF THE TERUAH FORETOLD THE GRIEF THAT WOULD ENGULF HIS FAMILY ONLY ONE DAY LATER. THE SHOFAR MEANT TO USHER IN A NEW BEGINNING - A NEW YEAR - INTONED INSTEAD AN ENDING - A CLOSING OF A LIFE. THE PRAYERS THAT ACCOMPANY THE SHOFAR TO BE INSCRIBED IN THE BOOK OF LIFE - WERE UNHEEDED AND ON ROSH HASHANAH, PHIL BERNSTEIN'S SOUL WAS TAKEN TO HIS ETERNAL REWARD.

THE SHOFAR WE BLOW IN SYNAGOGUE; THE SHOFAR SOUNDED AT PHIL'S BEDSIDE DOESN'T CONCLUDE WITH THE WEEPING.

AFTER THE SHEVARIM FRAGMENTATION AND THE TERUAH SOBBING, WE CONCLUDE WITH A TEKIAH GEDOLAH - A LONG SINGLE BLAST. THE

BLAST REMINDS US THAT AT THE END THERE IS TRIUMPH IN A GOOD PERSONS LIFE. THAT DESPITE THE BROKENNESS, DESPITE THE SORROW - THE SOUL CAN BE RESTORED TO ITS ORIGINAL PURITY.

THAT IN DEATH THE MEMORY OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVERSHADOWS GRIEF.

THAT THE SOUL RETURNS TO GOD - UNBROKEN; UNFRAGMENTED; CLEANSED OF PAIN; WHOLE.

THERE WAS MUCH TEKIAH - WHOLENESS IN PHIL'S LIFE. EVEN AT DEATH'S DOOR; EVEN IN PAIN - LIFE WAS SO PRECIOUS TO HIM THAT HE REFUSED TO GIVE IN - FIGHTING AND BELIEVING TO HE VERY END.

ESTHER REMEMBERS PHIL AS THE MOST CONTENTED OF MEN. THE WORST THINGS COULD HAPPEN, BUT HE WOULD RIDE THEM OUT. HE COULD COME TO TERMS WITH DISAPPOINTMENT AND FIND CONTENTMENT ON THE OTHER SIDE. IN OUR SHOFAR IMAGERY HE COULD TAKE LIFE'S FRAGMENTS AND MAKE THEM WHOLE AGAIN.

HE WAS A MAN WHO WAS ALWAYS THERE FOR HIS CHILDREN - CHORAL AND ARI. HE TOOK PRIDE IN THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. HE WAS ABLE TO LISTEN AND GUIDE THEM.

ARI REMEMBERS HIS DAD AS AN ADVISOR IN A Z A. WHEN ARI WAS SELECTED TO RECEIVE THE HONOR OF ALEPH OF THE YEAR, IT WAS DAD WHO WAS TO BESTOW IT.

ARI REMEMBERS THE WORDS "IT'S MY DOUBLE PLEASURE TO PRESENT THIS AWARD TO THE ALEPH OF THE YEAR, AND TO MY SON, ARI.

ARI RECALLS BEING SO MOVED THAT SOMEONE IN THE AUDIENCE HAD TO REMIND HIM TO GET UP TO THE PODIUM TO RECEIVE THE AWARD. THERE WAS A BONDING BETWEEN FATHER AND SON ON THAT DAY THAT WOULD NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

PHIL WAS A SPORTS FANATIC - A PIECE OF HIS LIFE THAT PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE - NOT ONLY AS A HOBBY - BUT IN HIS RELATIONSHIP TO HIS LOVED ONES.

HE CONVERTED HIS MOTHER, SARAH - WHO BECAME A DIEHARD HOCKEY FAN.

FOR HIS 65TH BIRTHDAY, THE FAMILY TOOK HIM TO A CRUCIAL PLAYOFF GAME. DURING THE BREAK - EVERYONE'S ATTENTION WAS DIVERTED TO THE SCOREBOARD WHICH ANNOUNCED HIS BIRTHDAY. - A CAPACITY CROWD CHEERED HIM AND ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT USUALLY A MAN WHO LIKED THE LIMELIGHT, HE ALWAYS REMEMBERED THAT DAY AS ONE OF THE BEST IN HIS LIFE - A DAY HE COULD COMBINE HIS PASSION FOR HIS FAMILY AND SPORTS.

HE PLAYED TENNIS UNTIL CLOSE TO THE END - COMPETING; SOMETIMES DEFEATING YOUNGER PLAYERS. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE "Y" FOR 52 YEARS WHERE HE CONTINUED HIS PASSION FOR SPORTS, EXERCISE AND CAMARADERIE.

ARI SPEAKS OF AN EVENT THAT HAPPENED WHEN HE WAS 12 YEARS OLD.
HE WAS THE PITCHER - FOR THE FIRST TIME - AND DAD STANDING
BEHIND HIM WAS THE UMPIRE.

IT MUST HAVE BROKEN PHIL'S HEART TO CALL THOSE BALLS AS ARI
WALKED BATTER AFTER BATTER, BUT PHIL, ALL THE WHILE STOOD BEHIND
HIM, ENCOURAGING HIM. AND AT THE END WHEN HE WAS RELIEVED,
SAYING "GOOD JOB ARI".

STANDING BEHIND ARI AS HE UMPIRED THAT BASEBALL GAME, IS AN
APT METAPHOR FOR PHIL'S WILLINGNESS TO STAND BEHIND HIS CHILDREN
DURING YOUTH'S MANY MINI-CRISES.

CHORAL REMEMBERS AN EVENT IN HER TEEN YEARS; WHEN SHE
DESPERATELY WANTED TO ATTEND A DANCE; BUT EVERYTHING WENT WRONG.
THE BOY SHE WANTED TO GO WITH COULDN'T ATTEND - AND - IN THE
EXAGGERATED WAY OF YOUTH - LIFE ITSELF SEEMED TO HAVE COME
APART.

IT WAS DAD WHO INSISTED - "GET UP, GET DRESSED AND GO ANYWAY."
PHIL DROVE HER TO THE DANCE HIMSELF. SHE WENT, MET PEOPLE
AND HAD A WONDERFUL TIME. "IF DAD HADN'T PUSHED ME", SHE
RECALLS, "I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD THE EXPERIENCE."

AND HE STOOD BEHIND CHORAL ON ONE OF THE MOST PROUD DAYS OF
HIS LIFE - HER WEDDING DAY. WHEN WITH HIS FIRST MADE TO MEASURE
SUIT AND A GLOW ON HIS FACE, HE ACCOMPANIED HER DOWN THE ISLE,
CHORAL RECALLS HOW "HE MADE THE WEDDING FOR ME."

CHORAL REMEMBERS HER DAD AS A SOFT SPOKEN MAN WHO HAD AN INNER
WISDOM, WHO UNDERSTOOD PEOPLE. "IF I WAS DOWN AND OUT," SHE
RECALLS, "HE HAD THE ABILITY TO MAKE ME HAPPY".

HE STOOD BEHIND HIS BROTHER, MARTY - TEACHING HIM TO RIDE HIS
FIRST BIKE - RUNNING BEHIND HIM AS HE PROUDLY RODE THE
2-WHEELER.

MARTY RECALLS PHIL AS A GENTLE MAN WHO NEVER LOST HIS TEMPER AND NEVER HAD A BAD WORD TO SAY ABOUT ANYONE.

IN EVERY FAMILY THERE IS FRAGMENTATION. - IN EVERY FAMILY THE SHOFAR'S TEKIAH TRIUMPHS ARE INTERRUPTED BY THE BROKEN SOUND OF THE SHEVARIM AND THE SOBBING TERUAH.

ARI RECALLS "A TIME WHEN WE WEREN'T CLOSE" BUT THEN "DAD ACCEPTED ME FOR WHO I WAS, NO LONGER TRYING TO CHANGE ME."

"I HAD A DIFFICULT TIME IN THE LAST FEW YEARS," HE SAYS BUT DAD WAS THERE REMINDING ME THAT THINGS WOULD WORK OUT THAT IT WASN'T THE END OF THE WORLD.

PHIL RECENTLY GAVE ARI A BIRTHDAY CAKE AND INSCRIBED WAS "TO THE BEST SON A FATHER COULD HAVE".

I SAID TO HIM, "I'M PROUD TO CALL YOU MY FATHER" AND HE WAS PROUD OF ME AS A SON.

THE DIFFICULTIES WERE OVERCOME - THE FRAGMENT MADE WHOLE.

THERE WERE OTHER FRAGMENTS. HIS MARRIAGE FOR OVER THREE DECADES TO RIVA ENDED IN DIVORCE. BUT FROM THEIR UNION CAME THEIR 2 PRECIOUS CHILDREN.

CHORAL RECALLS THAT "MY FATHER LOVED MY MOTHER VERY MUCH EVEN WHEN THEY DIVORCED." LOVING AND GETTING ALONG WITH ONE ANOTHER DON'T ALWAYS COMBINE. YOU COULD LOVE SOMEONE AND STILL NOT BE ABLE TO LIVE TOGETHER.

THAT RIVA WAS THERE FOR HIM - FEEDING HIM CHICKEN SOUP IN THE HOSPITAL - THAT SHE SHARES OUR GRIEF THIS DAY - THAT SHE FEELS BROKEN AND FRAGMENTED - SHOWS THAT THEIR 30 ODD YEARS TOGETHER WAS A TIME OF MUCH SHARING AND LOVING AND THAT RIVA'S BROKENNESS TOO IS IN NEED OF HEALING.

I CAN FIND FEW WORDS OF CONSOLATION FOR SARAH. ARIHAT YAMIM
- LENGTH OF DAYS, IS CONSIDERED A BLESSING IN OUR TRADITION.
BUT IN THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS A SON SHOULD BURY HIS MOTHER.
A SON SHOULD SAY KADDISH FOR HIS MOTHER. THERE IS NO OTHER
SOUND THAN THE WEEPING TERUAH TO DESCRIBE THE REVERSAL OF THE
NATURAL ORDER WHEN A MOTHER SITS SHIVA FOR HER SON.

TO BUBBE, DAD WASN'T JUST A SON, HE WAS A BEST FRIEND. SARAH
REMEMBERS HIM AS A FINE SON WHO WAS NOT EASILY OFFENDED _ WHO
TOOK CARE OF HER WHEN HER HUSBAND PASSED ON.

"MY WHOLE LIFE - EVERYTHING - I LOST MY WHOLE LIFE."

I PRAY THAT SARAH WILL FIND COMFORT IN HER CHILDREN AND
GRANDCHILDREN AND GREAT GRANDCHILD.

KNOWING THAT HE LIVES IN THEM - THAT WHEN SHE SEES THEM SHE

STILL SEES A PIECE OF HER SON. - FOR WHAT THEY BECOME WILL ALWAYS BE PART OF WHO HE WAS.

PHIL IS REMEMBERED FOR HIS MANY QUALITIES. HE WAS A HARD WORKING MAN WHO SOMETIMES PUT IN 60 HOUR WEEKS IN HIS PHARMACY - BUT HE ALSO HAD A WITTY SENSE OF HUMOR - AND ENJOYED LIFE. HE WILL BE MISSED, NOT ONLY BY HIS FAMILY - BUT ALSO BY HIS MANY FRIENDS AND HIS MONDAY NIGHT POKER BUDDIES.

HE WAS A MAN WHO WAS CONNECTED WITH HIS PEOPLE. A MEMBER OF BETH ISRAEL FOR MANY YEARS, THERE WAS ALWAYS A SPECIAL JOY ON FRIDAY NIGHT WHICH WAS SHARED WITH THE FAMILY. THE KIDDUSH WAS MADE; THE BREAD WAS BROKEN AND THE FAMILY WAS ABLE TO CHANGE THE FRAGMENTED WEEK INTO A SHABBOS WHOLE.

KAREN RECALLS HIS ONE TRIP TO ISRAEL - "HE WAS LIKE A KID - ANIMATED AND EXCITED - THRILLED TO BE THERE AND HAPPY TO SEE ME."

I RECALL VISITING HIM A FEW WEEKS AGO WHEN ARI SAID HE WAS NO LONGER VERY RSPONSIVE.

NEVERTHELESS HE DUG DEEP INTO HIS SPIRITUAL RESERVE AND RESPONDED TO MY READING OF THE SHEMA - REPEATING THE WORDS AFTER ME.

YESTERDAY MORNING ARI WAS INFORMED THAT DAD'S CONDITION WAS WORSENING. STANDING IN THE KITCHEN AT 1 MINUTE BEFORE 6:00, ARI FELT A FLASH, A TOUCH ON HIS SHOULDER.

"OH DAD", HE WHISPERED SOFTLY, "DON'T GO YET. I'LL BE THERE SOON." IT WAS PHIL SAYING GOOD-BYE. THE TIME OF HIS DEATH WAS 6:00 A.M.

THERE IS A SENSE OF COMPLETENESS IN PHIL'S DYING ON ROSH HOSHANAH. IT'S AS IF THE BOOK ON HIS LIFE ENDED JUST AS THE

YEAR ENDED. AS IF THE FINAL CHAPTER WAS COMPLETED AND THE WORDS "THE END" WERE INSCRIBED AFTER THE LAST WORD.

THERE IS MEANING IN THE SHOFAR HE HEARD ON THE LAST FULL DAY OF HIS LIFE.

PHIL'S LIFE WAS FULL OF CONTENTMENT - THE TEKIAH'S WHOLE SOUND OF THE SHOFAR RANG TRUE FOR HIS LOVE FOR HIS FAMILY AND HIS LOVE OF LIFE.

WHILE THERE WAS FRAGMENTATION IN HIS LIFE AND WHILE THE STACCATO TERUAH SOBBING NOW ENGULFS HIS LOVED ONES IN GRIEF, THERE IS A PRAYER THAT IN THE END THE FINAL NOTE HE HEARD WAS THE TEKIAH GEDOLAH - THE FINAL LONG SHOFAR BLAST THAT REMINDS US THAT WHAT IS BROKEN CAN BE MADE WHOLE - AND THAT OUR GRIEF CAN BE HEALED.

NEXT YEAR AND THE YEAR AFTER AND FOR MANY YEARS - YOU, WHO
LOVED PHIL BERNSTEIN, WILL COME TO SHULE AND HEAR THE DIFFERENT
SOUNDS OF THE SHOFAR AND WHEN YOU HEAR THEM - YOU WILL REMEMBER
THE SOUL OF PHIL BERNSTEIN - FOR WHOM THE SHOFAR SOUNDS - AND
PERHAPS IT WILL HELP YOU, ALL OF US TO BEGIN MAKING WHOLE OUR
SHATTERED LIVES.