

Reflection from JoEllen Duckor

As we approach the anniversary of October 7, we may be holding a great deal of suffering, pain, grief, and anxiety. For many of us, and for me as well, I am coming into this season with a heart that is hurting, numbed and closing.

The challenge for me is to open my heart.

The sound of the shofar and the teachings around it, have helped me to begin to take down some of the walls I have put up around my heart since October 7.

The sound of the shofar has been described as a primal cry, as the hearts forgotten language that expresses our shared pain and anguish as human beings.

We learn from a passage in the Talmud that the broken sounds of the shofar express a sob or a wail. Specifically, they mimic the cry of the mother of Sisera, a Canaanite general who led a battle against the Israelites upon realizing that her son has been killed in battle and will never return home.

The call of the shofar is the anguished cry of our enemies mother. The shofar calls us to attune to the shared experience of human pain and suffering.

And so as we listen to the call of the shofar, we can try to notice when we have turned away from the suffering of others.

We start with Teki'ah, a whole note.

Then Shvarim, a broken note

Then Teru'ah, an entirely fragmented note.

Each broken note is followed by a whole note, another Teki'ah.

We start off whole, We become broken, even splintered into fragments. But we become whole again.

(Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz who lived in Prague in the 17th century)