

Dear Chavraya,

Every Torah portion offers its own framework through which to view events that occur within the week of its reading. Personal events of this week leave me with little energy, but a desire to share briefly of my own thoughts through the shimmering mirror of Torah and prayer. Having had some surgery this week, I am left feeling very aware of my body. And so I read in a different way than ever before a verse that has always fascinated me in this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Pinchas*.

Twice in the Torah, Moses addresses God as *Elohei Haruchot L'chol Basar/God of the Spirits of all Flesh*. As all of God's names express an aspect of God's being, I have understood this name to refer to God as the animating force, the life force in every person, the Source of every soul. With this week's reading, I found literal emphasis on flesh as the body, not as reference to people in general. It was suddenly about God's spirit in relation to my own body, of feeling God's animating, healing presence within my physical being. Seeking God in relation to my body this week, body and soul became as one, the physical and spiritual flowing together without separation.

So too, one of the early morning prayers took on special significance. An echo of Moses calling to God's as "God of the Spirits of all Flesh," it is a beautiful prayer, so personal in the context of vulnerability. Said traditionally upon going to the bathroom as well as at the start of the day, it is a prayer that sings awestruck praise for the wondrous nature of our bodies:

Blessed are You, God our God, Sovereign of the universe, Who formed the Human with wisdom, and created within each person openings and hollow spaces.... If but one of them was opened or but one of them closed [if not meant to be], it would be impossible to be sustained and to stand before You. Blessed are You, God, Healer of all flesh/Rofeh chol basar, Who does wondrously.

Of body and soul joined together as one through God's spirit, there came to me as a meditation this week the last verse of "Adon Olam:"

B'yado afkid ruchi, b'et ishan v'a'irah; v'im ruchi g'viyati, Hashem li, v'lo irah.
I place my spirit in God's care, my body too can feel God near; when I sleep, as when I wake, God is with me; I have no fear.

May the warmth of sunshine finally come bring healing to body and soul. God of the Spirits of all Flesh, help us to honor in the way of our living the most wondrous of Your creations.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor