

Shlom Bayyit



TEKIAH... It's a Blast!

It is piercing, soulful, and powerful. It intimidates and stirs us. In modern times it is intimately associated with the Days of Awe, *Yamin Nora'im* - the High Holy Days. It is the awesome sound of the Shofar. The blasts are calling us to heighten

our awareness and raise our consciousness to the awesome task before us.

Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, unlike other major festivals which are associated with historical events, are personal holidays. It is a time for each of us to scrutinize our behavior, reassess our lives, and reconnect with our spirituality. It is time to be awakened to *Teshuvah*, repentance - literally turning, or perhaps returning to God. It is a time, as Jews, to fulfill the commandment to hear the sound of the Shofar.

This primitive instrument is mentioned in the Torah from Exodus to Zechariah. It was sounded as Moses descended Mt. Sinai with God's Commandments. (Exodus 24:7) In ancient times it announced the New Moon and solemn feasts. It was employed as a signal of war; it sounded when Joshua tore down the walls of Jericho. It was used in religious ceremonies and processions. Today we associate the Shofar's sound with the High Holy Days.

What is a Shofar?

It is most often a ram's horn, reminding us that Abraham was willing to sacrifice that which was most sacred to him, his son Isaac, to honor God before He intervened with a replacement, a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. (Genesis 22:13) Goat, antelope or gazelle horns may be substituted since they are all kosher animals. The horns of cows or bulls may not be used since they are associated with the Golden Calf incident. The rabbis agreed that it is not in the best interest of the Jewish people to remind God of this indiscretion at a time when He is sitting in judgment.

The Shofar can be viewed as a metaphor for the Jewish people. It is hollow until a person breathes into it. Then it becomes alive. At Rosh Hashonah we are empty vessels. Through introspection and self examination we can fill and improve our lives. There is a bend in the ram's horn like "the human heart, in true repentance, bends before the Lord."

Those sounds?

They were derived by third century Talmudic scholars and deduced from Torah. There are 3 specific notes.

Tekia – a long "blast" ending abruptly

Shevarim – "broken" a wailing sound of three short, wavering sounds.

Teruah – "alarm" a pattern of 9 rapid notes

The rabbis debated about the sequence and number of Shofar blasts. The conventional sequence that we will hear on Rosh Hashonah at Temple Beth Rishon is:

Tekiah, shevarim-teruah, tekiah

Tekia, shevarim, tekia

Tekia, teruah, "tekiah gadola"

The final blast is the "great *tekiah*" and is held as long as possible. It is the time when the congregants at Beth Rishon are in awe of our own *Ba'al Tekia* (Masters of the Blast). Making the air in the column vibrate to produce a clear sound is not as simple a task as it might seem. Consider joining those on the bema and showing off your technique this year.

Maimonides described the goal of the blasts of the shofar as "an allusion, as if to say, 'Awake, O you sleepers, awake from your sleep! O you slumberers, awake from your slumber! Search your deeds and turn in Teshuvah.'"

Our Rabbi Kershenbaum teaches us, "The pattern of blasts..... reflects the journey of our souls, our people, the world: all started out whole; there is a period of brokenness or troubles; all will be whole again..... If we carry within us the message of the Shofar, it will see us through the pattern of our lives: daily, weekly, by decades: whenever we feel we are in need of healing, the call *TEKIAH* can stir our hopes that soon we will experience wholeness anew."

We hear the Shofar at the beginning of the Days of Awe, and we are reminded of our beginning – the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. A single long note is sounded in the final moments of Yom Kippur, and we are reminded that at the arrival of the Messiah the blast of the Shofar will sound again.

The Ritual Committee extends the hope that you come to fulfill the commandment to hear the Shofar and that you pray with us as we welcome the New Year, 5768. In those final moments of Yom Kippur, when The Book of Life is sealed, we wish that you and your loved ones are inscribed for a Happy and Healthy New Year.