

The Sound of the Shofar: Meanings and Sounds

Rosh Hashanna is the anniversary of the world. Legend says that when the world was created, the sound of the shofar was heard, heralding the coming of physical order out of chaos. The sounding of the shofar is to remind each of us, individually and as a nation, to bring our spirit out of chaos, to judge our conduct carefully, (this is the day of Judgment, after all.....within the days of awe)! And to rededicate ourselves to goodness and our highest values.

The simple sound of the Shofar is a reminder that there is a part of our beings that wants and needs to be heard.

During the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashana, notice there are three distinct sounds:

1. *Tekiah* -- one long, straight blast
2. *Shevarim* -- three medium; sounds
3. *Teruah* -- 9 quick blasts in short succession
4. *(then a final tekiah hagadol on yom kippur)*

THE TEKIAH SOUND

Tekiah -- the long, straight shofar blast -- is the sound of recognizing that we want to “wake” up to the spiritual highest side of ourself and the universe: kind of like a spiritual alarm clock!. It is time to re check in our our values, our highest nature, the deepest reality and understanding of the universe. It is a simple sound, beneath words and logic, from the heart.. A long deep note, which ends abruptly, calling us to assemple for prayer, for a reckoning of the soul.

THE SHEVARIM SOUND

When we think about the year gone by, we have an opportunity to explore where we have not lived up to our full potential. There are two kaballistic meanings to the three medium blasts of the shevarim. One is that it is a wailing, a sadness, , a wailing, a sobbing cry of a heart – yearning to connect, to grow, to achieve. At the moment the shofar is blown, we cry out to God from the depths of our soul. This is the moment -- when our souls stand before the Almighty without any barriers -- that we can truly come from a place of yearning and honest openness.

A second view is that these broken sounds are a sound of alarm---broken notes signalling those times this past year when we have been “broken”, fragmented, “not our whole self.” It is a sign to beware (mindful, careful, care full—full of care), There is dust that exists, there are “kleipot” (husks) that hide our true pure spiritual nature. Do not be complacent, denying, hiding. Be honest in your self-examination. Even if it may be painful. Even if it may involve a crying out.

Every person has the ability to change and be great. This can be accomplished much faster than you ever dreamed of. The key is to pray from the bottom of your heart and ask God for the ability to become great. Don't let yourself be constrained by the past. You know you have enormous potential.

THE TERUAH SOUND

On Rosh Hashana, we need to wake up and be honest and objective about our lives: Who we are, where we've been, and which direction we're headed. The *Teruah* sound -- 9 quick blasts in short succession -- has two different meanings again. One view is that it resembles an alarm clock, arousing us from our spiritual slumber. (In case we re fall asleep from the Tekiah!?!?)

The second is that these nine are a summoning of strength and force for the struggle (sometimes hard, challenging, sometimes effortless effort—whatever feels to be skillful means at the time), to address our dust, to keep our context, to let our “light shine.”

The Talmud says: "When there's judgement from below, there's no need for judgement from above." What this means is that if we take the time to construct a sincere, realistic model of how we've fallen short in the past, and what we expect to change in the future, then God doesn't need to "wake us up" to what we already know.

God wants us to make an honest effort to maximize the gifts God gave us. You aren't expected to be anything you're not. But you can't hoodwink God, either.

The reason we lose touch and make mistakes is because we don't take the time everyday to reconnect with our deepest desires and essence. The solution is to spend time alone everyday, asking: Am I on track? Am I focused? Am I pursuing goals which will make the greatest overall difference in my life and in the world? The shofar brings clarity, alertness, and focus.

If we make it a habit to keep in touch with ourself, when Rosh Hashana comes around, the alarm clock of the shofar won't be nearly as jarring!

THE FINAL BLAST. TEKIAH HAGADOL

A long blast, pointing to the final victory, when all people will worship in peace and justice. When we will achieve the cleansing of the dust, see our true nature, realize who we are, our piece of the cosmic puzzle. As we blow and hear this, we offer forgiveness for the past (self and other) and we feel ourselves in that pure holy place, with our pure soul, dancing with God.