

## Rosh Hashanah 2014 Shofar Dvar Torah

Shana Tova. A month ago, Rabbi Latz contacted me to see if I would be willing to do a short Dvar Torah before this year's Shofar service. I think this was prompted in part by discussions he and I had a year ago about this part of the service - so I should warn you to be careful about discussions you have with the Rabbi or you too may end up on the Bimah!

Rabbi Latz's charge to me was to briefly talk about why I find the Shofar service meaningful. This is actually pretty easy for me as I find the blowing of the shofar among the most meaningful and spiritual parts of the year, along with the communal singing of Elihayu Hanavi at the end of Yom Kippur.

The commandment to blow the shofar comes from Numbers 29:1 - "in the seventh month (*Tishrei*), on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion (*Rosh Hashanah*), you shall not work. you shall observe it as a day of sounding the horn". There are 3 main notes, Tekiah, Shevarim and Teruah - and of course the final Tekiah Gedolah - all amounting to a total of 100 notes during the service. One thought about the purpose of the shofar blowing is that we should tremble in awe as we stand before G-D and another is that it is a wake up call for all of us. Now interestingly, the 2 Berachot or blessings said right before the shofar blowing are first, that we are commanded to "hear the sound of the shofar" and the second is the Shehecheyanu - for allowing us to reach this day. While the Torah commandment is to blow the shofar, later Jewish traditions understood the essential mitzvah as hearing the shofar.

So why is this meaningful to me. Part of it is tradition and part is merely the experience. The tradition goes back to my childhood and Jordan Hochstadt. To this day, I can remember standing with my family in the large sanctuary at Beth Joseph Congregation in Denver where I grew up, and listening to my cantor, Maurice Weiss, call out the notes and Mr. Hochstadt blowing the shofar with clarity and strength. I remember being with my parents and extended family and the feeling of security that comes with that to a child - as well as an adult today. Over the years, as I have moved and been a member or visited various synagogues, I can still remember the various shofar blowers and the differences in what I heard with each.

I can remember the first time I brought my son in to services to hear the shofar and stood in the back of this very sanctuary when it was still the Adath and held him in my arms and later, as my 2 daughters, Rose and Georgia, joined my family - standing together with them and trying to impart that same reverence and awe as we listened to the shofar notes. Even when my in-laws moved to St. Paul, we would go over on Rosh Hashanah to the Wellington Apartments in St. Paul where they were living and our son, Jacob, would blow the shofar there for all the Jewish residents in the building and it would make Larry and Edith very happy. Now as my children have moved on to other cities and my wife, Carolyn, and I stand together in services - I close my eyes as I listen to the Shofar and recall all those memories and think about what the year may bring and by the end of the service, feel a sense of calmness spread over me.

Just as our song leaders and choir can elevate our prayer to a higher level, to me, the shofar blowers can do the same. I know this puts a huge responsibility on them, when the blessing puts the responsibility on us to listen - but perhaps, with their assistance, we can all imagine standing in G-d's presence. May it be a good year for all of us.