

The Sound of the Shofar
Presented by Susan Geffen/ Shofar blower: Arthur Reich

Shalom.

The Jewish New Year begins in the Fall of the year with Rosh Hashona and ends 10 days later on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when God decides who shall live and who shall die. These are the Days of Awe, the holiest days of our year. It is when we celebrate all that is new, and atone for our past sins so we can move forward with a clean slate.

The sound of the shofar awakens us and calls on us to take responsibility for any pain we have caused others. Only when we have the forgiveness of the people we have hurt can we ask, on Yom Kippur, for God's forgiveness.

The shofar is meant to shock us out of complacency and force us to look around and see the world and ourselves, anew. It is an instrument with a 3,000 year history. And has been used to usher in everything from freedom, to proclaiming victory in war, bringing down the walls of Jericho, to bringing us closer to God.

The sound of the shofar opens up the portals between heaven and earth and helps us reach a higher, more holy place. It speaks in pure sound, representing our reach for purity as we stand totally simple, totally human asking for forgiveness.

This is a shofar. (Arthur holds it up) It is a hollowed-out ram's horn, soaked so that it can be made to curve, as we are bent, in supplication asking pardon for our sins.

There are four shofar blasts heard on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: (I will "sing" each). The rabbi and the shofar blower stand on the Bima of the synagogue. The rabbi sings out each calling and the shofar responds.

Tekiah is a 3 second sustained blast to call us to attention.

Shevarim are three 1 second notes rising in tone to help us break through our own boundaries

Teru'ah is a trill of 9 short sounds like an alarm to get us ready to break through to the heavens.

Tki'ahg'dolah (only sounded on Yom Kippur) is the final blast that needs to last 10 seconds at least. The person blowing can turn red in the face on this one. And when it's done, everyone breathes a sigh of appreciation and relief.

When the shofar is sounded at the end of Yom Kippur, our day of fasting, the Days of Awe are ended and we can move fully, confidently and abundantly into the New Year ahead.