



Torah for Turbulent Times

"Birdsong or a Wake Up Call?"

There's a *machlochet* in our house. That's the Hebrew word for "disagreement." Do we leave the windows open at night or close them? To be sure there are plenty of other more meaningful disagreements, but this one is constant. One of us likes to hear the birds in the morning, a sweet song to the start of the day. For the other, the tweeting interrupts those precious extra morning "z's." Yes, hearing the shofar is perhaps like the sweet and familiar notes to the "song" that signals the start to a new year. It's also a wake up call to interrupt our schedule (whatever may be left of it) and to tune us in to assess our habitual ways of living. It's that time of year again with just *twenty-four* more days until Rosh Hashanah (beginning Friday evening, September 18th).

Last week's reflection reminded us that we have entered into the waning days of the Jewish year. Certainly this Rosh Hashanah, like everything else, will be different. If tradition has anything to say about it, the suggestion is to do what we do best. Be part of the community. Participate in ways that feel comfortable. Gather with loved ones if we're able. Wish each other a "shanah tova." Pray together. And, like we do every year, hear the ancient and primal calls of the shofar. It's customary to start sounding and hearing the shofar throughout this month to prepare us for what's to come. Among other things, like community togetherness, special melodies, and personal meaning - listening to the sounds of the shofar was identified in our recent community gatherings as a key element to the continuity and spirituality of our High Holidays. It's always been that way.

Besides beginning to do a bit of self-reflection and some menu planning, how else can we embrace the fluidity and meaning of our times? What might the sounds of the shofar symbolize for us this year? ([Send me](#) your thoughts and I'll integrate your ideas anonymously into our Rosh Hashanah service this year.) Throughout time and in our tradition sounding the shofar has been a constant. It was heard during times of sacrifice, conflict, revelation and joy. While times have certainly changed over these thousands of years, these themes have not. The shofar has sounded our people through it all - hardship, struggle, sickness, isolation, darkness, insight, discernment, health and joy. And it will, no matter what, do it again this year too.

We just have to be present to hear the call.

Rabbi Mark