

Our Voice as Shofar - Rabbi Samantha Frank
Rosh Hashanah 5783

Shana tovah!

What a year it has been - what a year it has been! Since we last gathered in the tent to welcome the new year.

I almost can't believe how fast the time has gone - it's been a blur of new Covid vaccines, boosters, disruptions to school and holiday plans, worries about our democracy and how we will come together despite our differences - and here we are now, welcoming a new year.

Whatever our age, we have carried a lot on our shoulders and in our hearts.

So as we enter this new year, we acknowledge where we've been, – and then we actively choose to step forward. And with this new year comes the opportunity to try new things.

And I have to tell you, I have been dreaming about doing something like this - for years. Years and years. And finally, it seems like the right time to do it, here, outside, on Rosh Hashanah in the tent, with all of you.

We are going to be - with our bodies - like the shofar. What makes the shofar a shofar?

Yes, it is a ram's horn - or the horn of any kosher animal.

Yes, we sound it every Rosh Hashanah.

The most important thing about the shofar is that it is *loud*.

It is loud, so we can hear it. The shofar comes from a time before we had cell phones or home phones or even when it was very hard to send a letter from one person to another. Not everyone could read, or write, and even if you could, parchment and ink were hard to come by.

But animals, with their horns, were more plentiful for our ancestors. So they used a shofar to connect to one another.

There are three different Shofar sounds -

T'kiyah - the long call of gathering- the sound of connection

T'ruah - the sound of the alarm, nine short blasts.

and Shevarim - the sound of brokenness, three short blasts.

I said that we are going to be shofars. Yes, my friends, we are going to use our voices and our bodies to be very, very, very loud.

So in just a minute, I'm going to invite you - if you want, to stand up, and to make the loudest noise you can. Yes, we are outside, and yes, there are many of us. You may want to cover your ears, because I am serious about this noisemaking.

Two Important things before we do:
This gesture, which means - STOP !

And I also want you to think - which sound do you want to try?

TKIYA - the long, sound of connection?
Shevarim - the three short sounds of brokenness?
Truah - the nine boop boop boop ...sound of alarm?

Ok, are you ready?

TKIYAH-

stop.

Let's pause, take a breath. Come to stillness. We are going to stay in this quiet for a moment.

Ok, let's try being shofars again - as loud as we can -

TKIYAHHH

STOP.

Let's pause, take a breath. Come to stillness. We are going to stay in this quiet for a moment.

Now I want to try something else - can we make a lot of noise, but only whisper ?

(Whispered): Tkiyahhhh!
Quiet.

Wow, thank you so much for joining this experiment. We are letting go of our BEING a shofar-time of the day, though we'll hear the shofar later...

Now, I have a question - :
what did it feel like to be loud? To be really, really loud ?

And what did it feel like to be really, really quiet.

The Unetaneh Tokef, our great High Holy Day prayer proclaims: "the great shofar is sounded, and a still small voice is heard."

There are some moments that are for making lots of noise - for using our voices to connect. For using our bodies to communicate - to say, "let's be together," "something is broken," "something needs our attention."

And, we also need to take great care to pay attention to the moments where we can hear the still small voice from within.

Sometimes, when we listen to the quiet, we realize that even quiet can be loud. After all, during the quiet moments, we still experienced the sound of the world moving around us - the traffic, the birds, the wind, our own precious thoughts.

Last year, we talked about how celebrating Rosh Hashanah is a way to time travel - to be with all the people in years and generations before us who celebrated this holy day.

When we take moments for stillness, we travel through time in a different way. Physicists tell us that for someone who is running, time moves more slowly than for someone who is sitting still, unmoving. You might have expected that by staying still, time moves more slowly. Yet it is the opposite.

When we take moments for stillness and quiet, when we pause to watch the world around and within us, this is when we experience more time, and when we experience life in the most deep and full way.

May this year bring us many moments of sweetness, of using our voices like a shofar -

May you be a *tkiyah*, using your voice to connect with others.

May you be a *truah*, using your voice to sound the alarm to injustice?

May you be a *shevarim*, your voice to express that something is causing pain?

And, most of all, may you make time and space to listen to *kol d'mamah dakah*, the still small voice within.

Shana tovah.