

As humans we crave connections. We look for ways to align ourselves with others that are like minded and share similar values. When I was in the fourth grade, the music teacher met our class in the auditorium. We had the opportunity to try different instruments. I always thought it would be cool to play the saxophone. After barely making a sound, the music teacher handed me a trumpet. He showed me how to purse my lips and suggested that I try. I followed his instructions and a melodious tone exited the bell of the trumpet. There was an instant connection deep within me. For years I tried to perfect my tone and whenever I was stressed or frustrated as a teenager I would go into my room and practice. The sound of the trumpet was calming and soothing. That sound always centered me. It reminded me to focus on what was important and to drown out the rest of the noise.

Maimonides once said *Although the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a Torah decree, there is an allusion in it as well. It says: "Be roused, sleepers ... search your deeds and return in teshuvah". He continued by saying that* Even though the blowing of the shofar is a Biblical statute, it is also a symbolic "wake-up call", stirring Jews to mend their ways and repent: "Sleepers, wake up from your slumber! Examine your ways and repent and remember your Creator".

For me, sounding the shofar helps me re-focus and awakens my soul. It is a time to remind me to listen to myself and focus on what truly matters. It makes me think of how I can improve upon myself to be a better person, friend, parent and spouse.

Standing on the bimah and sounding the shofar has taken on a new meaning for me. I feel as if the sound starts deep within my soul, seeking connections with others that share a similar past. It provides me with a vehicle to help others remind themselves on what is most important in a communal setting. I've often mentioned that it takes a village to have a thriving synagogue. The shofar gives me another opportunity to help my community in connecting people with themselves and one another.

Although I will not have the opportunity to stand before you in person on the bimah, I hope that when you hear the sounding of the shofar via your computer, that it will give you the sense of belonging and new beginnings. I pray that this year will bring us all good health and happiness. L'shana Tovah U'metekah.