

L'SHANAH TOVAH!

In the weeks prior to Rosh Hashanah, we have been reciting Psalm 27 as part of our liturgy. During the last few Shabbat services, we have sung: “One thing I ask of the LORD, only that do I seek: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD, to frequent God’s temple.” What is the motivation here-- Is this a plea for High Holiday tickets or something deeper? It is a cry to start the new year with a sacred partnership that will inspire us. All too often we see our religious obligations as a chore or as something that we do and then cross off the list. But this line from the Psalms reminds us of our yearning and the transformative power of ritual observance.

Look at how the Chasidic master, the Ba'al Shem Tov, viewed the *shofar* ritual: “The matter of a miracle is that when something new occurs in nature, it is called a miracle, but afterwards it becomes natural as well. In the verse, “Blow this month (*ba-chodesh*) the *shofar*” (Ps. 81:4), one could question why it did not say, “Blow the *shofar* anew (*ba-chadash*).” The reason is because a person should see themselves as *ba-chodesh*, that is, renewing one's good deeds, such that they do not become a fixed rule.” He implored his disciples not to make ritual observance a habit, but rather an exciting and new practice, [even though people do it over and over again!]

The Psalm 27 verse encouraged us to yearn for *kavanah*/spiritual integrity and the Ba'al Shem Tov text reminded us that it comes from within! Now the RaMBaM adds another dimension—he wrote in his law code, the *Mishnah Torah*: “Even though the blowing of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a Biblical decree, it hints at something, i.e., “Wake up, sleepers, from your sleep! And slumberers, arise from your slumber!” The sound of the Shofar is the vehicle to muster that transition within us.

Keep this in mind when you sit in the sanctuary tonight and tomorrow and in Collins Park in Clifton Park on Sunday. Think about these teachings as we recite the *bracha*: *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam asher kiddishanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'shmoah et kol haShofar....* Who commands us to HEAR the voice of the Shofar. Then let the melody and notes that Neil Golub will make, wash thru-out your being and resonate deep in your soul as you seek to grow into the best possible version of the self!

Commented [MC1]:

May 5784 be a good year for us all!!