

# BETH ISAIAH CONGREGATION

## Rosh hashana

If a person does not know the meaning of the prayers but worships G-d, be blessed, because He commanded that He should be worshiped. Though he does not know even the meaning of the words his prayer ascends and pierces the firmament. For the Sacred words of the Torah and prayer contain a superior sanctity, and when they issue from the heart of the person who is praying for the sake of heaven, they bring about great amendments in the superior worlds  
( Or Yesharim, quoting the Baal Shem Tov)

### Tradition for Rosh Hashana

**The Shofar:** The blowing of the shofar is the only special biblical ritual for Rosh Hashanah. The symbolism of the shofar is not made explicit in the Torah. Whether it is meant to arouse our slumbering souls or as a clarion call to war against the worst part of our natures, the primitive sound of the shofar blast stirs something deep within us. There is a sense of expectation in the silent before the shofar sound, followed by unease evoked by the carious blasts. Part of its sense of mystery lies in the interplay of the silence, the piercing sound and the hum of people praying. On its most basic level the shofar can be seen to express what we cannot find the right words to say. The blasts are the wordless cries of the people of Israel. The shofar is the instrument that sent those cries of pain and longing hurtling across the vast distance toward the other.

There are three shofar sounds. **Tekia'ah** one long blast; **Shevarim** – three short blasts; **Teru'ah** nine staccato blasts. The Torah does not state explicitly how many shofar blasts are required, but the Rabbis (based on a complicated exegesis of Leviticus and Numbers) derived the necessity to have three blasts of Teru'ah preceded by and followed by Teki'ah. The only question for the Rabbi is what constitute Teruah. One opinion is that it should sound like groaning (our shevarim sound); another is that it should sound like sobbing (what we call Teru'ah); and the third opinion that it should sound like both together (our shevarim teruah). Therefore, we have the pattern of Teki'ah Teru'ah Teki'ah, Teki'ah shevarim Teki'ah, Teki'ah shevarim Teru'ah Teki'ah to cover all possibilities.

The mitzvah of the shofar is to hear the shofar being blown, not to actually blow it yourself, hence the blessing : "...to hear the sound of the shofar".

Because it might lead for a violation of Shabbat laws, the Rabbis decreed that when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat (like this year) the shofar should not be sounded. Which means that during those years when the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, the shofar is not blown until the second day.

### **How to succeed in Shule on the High Holidays by really trying**

The Holy Days present a grand opportunity for returning to our own sources as Jews. The time in the synagogue should not be squandered, but used to great effect. Below are some suggested guidelines.

- a. Relax. Don't worry about keeping up with the paqges. If you find a prayer whose words reach out to you, dwell on it, Don't rush.
- b. Try not to talk to anyone around you. Not just for the reasons of decorum, but because prayer is essentially a question of mood. \ Chit chat destroys the mood,
- c. Come early and prepare to stay. A brief visit to shule will leave you cold. A longer stay enables you to get into the spirit of the day.
- d. Relax again, Remove the chips from your shoulders, whether against G-d or man, Judaism, administration...
- e. Don't take your pulse. Don't worry if you are "enjoying" the services. If you are being inspired, moved or stimulated, let the words, the melodies. Their melodies. Forget yourself, lose yourself in the davening.
- f. Bring your whole self to the prayers, Speak to Hashem, G-d, pour your heart to him and listen for Him.
- g. Listening is important. Don't just read your prayer book. Listen to it. For the prayers were written by religious genius, And when you pray you are really listening to a magnificent religious symphony.
- h. Praying is a privilege. Look at it this way, you will be participating before you know it.
- i. Be positive and constructive. Look at others in a good eye, On Rosh Hashanah take aim for a spiritual lift off into a beautiful and rewarding Judaic experience