

RABBI'S MESSAGE

The First of the Rest

When the final blast of the shofar makes its seemingly endless chord at the end of Yom Kippur, it is time to break our fast and move into the New Year. Philosophically, we began a ten-day period that started on Rosh Hashana. A New Year's celebration includes toasting the sweetness of beginnings with apples and honey, and a day filled with countless prayers to the Holy One asking to be inscribed in the metaphorical "Book of Life." Then we have ten days to reflect on the previous year in preparation for the confessionals of Yom Kippur. The full day of prayer and fasting on Yom Kippur can be both invigorating and exhausting, as we bring an entire year into our focus. No matter how good or bad the previous year was (and like all years, it was probably both!), we pray that next year will be better. And if not, we pray we will be able to deal with whatever comes our way with strength of faith.

We may think of that final shofar blast as an ending; and it is in some ways. It is the end of Highest of Holy Days, and we hope we have made them meaningful and inspiring. And yet, we can also think of it as a call to begin. Begin the New Year with the spirit we brought to these important days.

On Rosh Hashana, the sound of the shofar is broken up into many different sounds. Some scholars have proposed that the brokenness of the shofar sounds represents the disjointed aspects of our lives. From a hundred long, short, and staccato notes, we come together at the end of Yom Kippur to hear one long sound. Some think of this as a coming together, combining the broken pieces as we try to make our lives whole.

I suggest that the real impact of the High Holy Days does *not* happen during Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, **OR** the days in between. The Book of Life starts when we leave our worship space and move into the year. However we prayed, however we behaved, whatever we hoped for, will all come to life. While Rosh Hashana is the first day of the year, the day after Yom Kippur is the first day of the *rest* of the year. Let us continue to hear the sound of the shofar each day, working toward complete wholeness for our souls and for our community. Let these days of awareness inspire us to a growing awareness of how to be blessings for those around us. And may this inspiration lead us to next year's review, excited about how we've grown, with a realization of how far we have to go.

Our sages teach about the importance of the days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Let's also remember the importance of the days between Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashana.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon