

SHOFAR REFLECTIONS

On *Rosh Hashana* we blow the shofar 100 sounds during the prayer service.

The 100 sounds of the shofar are associated with 100 aspects of love within ourselves. The pattern of the sounds is discussed in great detail in the Kabbalah, and is rooted in spiritual aspects of our inner consciousness called *sefirot*.

In a simple understanding, the 1st sound of the shofar represents the lowest level of having love only for oneself. Each progressive sound of the shofar represents higher levels of spiritual development of having more and more love for everyone. The final extra long sound of the *tekia gedola* represents attaining the spiritual consciousness of complete unconditional love.

In one of the many *kavanot* (meditations) of the shofar blowing, the sounding of the shofar is associated with the aspects of right, left, center, and oneness. In Kabbalistic spiritual language, the aspects of right, left, and center are not directions in space, but rather represent spiritual states of consciousness.

Right corresponds metaphorically to our experience of thankfulness and our aspect of giving.

Left corresponds metaphorically to our experience of lack and our aspect of receiving.

Center is the balance and harmony of right and left.

Oneness is the spiritual realization of unconditional love and infinite goodness.

These 4 stages of consciousness correspond to the 4 letters of the Divine Name יהוה .

The *kavanot* of the shofar blowing breaks down on one simple level into the 4 aspects as follows:

tekia-----long sound-----right/giving-----י
shevarim-----3 sounds-----left/receiving-----ה
terua-----9 sounds-----center/harmony-----ו
tekia gedola----extra long sound-----oneness-----ה

When we count 100 sounds, *tekia*, *shevarim*, *terua*, and *tekia gedola* each count as 1 sound.

This painting depicts the 100 sounds of the shofar, starting from the bottom of the painting and progressing upwards. One triangle represents the whole sound of the *tekia*. 3 triangles represent the 3 sounds of the *shevarim*. 9 triangles represent the 9 short sounds of the *terua*.

There is a tradition of blowing the 100 sounds of the shofar in 4 sets of sounds: 3 sets of 30 sounds and a final set of 10 sounds. The final sound of each set is Kabbalistically associated with the *sefira*, or aspect of consciousness, called *Malchut*.

One of the many concepts which is associated with *Malchut*, is the idea in the Kabbalah, that when our souls finally come to experience our Divine reality, that we will come to realize how everything that we experience in our lives is all a perfect part of the ultimate Divine plan. It is explained in the Kabbalah that everything we are going through in our lives, including all of the suffering which we experience, is all part of our souls coming to experience the infinite and eternal goodness at the root of all creation.

In this painting the 4 shofar sounds associated with *Malchut* are represented by an inverse reflection of the shofar sounds that precede them. This is to express the concept of our ultimately coming to see how everything is part of the Divine plan, even though this is not apparent along the way.

The first 3 sounds of *Malchut* reflect their own respective sets of shofar sounds. The final sound of the shofar blowing is the extra long sound of the *Tekia Gedola*, that represents the final *Malchut*. This sound starts in the exact center of the painting and is depicted by a reflection of all the shofar notes from the very beginning.

When counting all of the shofar sounds in this depiction, the 100 sounds reflect to become a total of 366. This is very interesting as it reflects the days of the year- one sound for each day and the final sound that is all inclusive.

The long whole sound of the *tekia* is associated with giving. The 3 broken sounds of the *shevarim* are associated with receiving. The 9 sounds of the *terua* are associated with harmony.

In addition to the *shevarim* being associated with receiving, it contains 3 sounds which correspond to all 3 aspects of giving, receiving, and harmony.

In addition to the *terua* being associated with harmony, its 9 sounds correspond to giving, receiving and harmony of giving + giving, receiving and harmony of receiving + giving, receiving and harmony of harmony.

The right column is discussed in the Kabbalah as the consciousness of our hearts overflowing with thankfulness. This corresponds to the sound of the *tekia*, which is a whole sound.

The left column corresponds to the sound of the *shevarim* which is the 3 broken cries of the shofar, our feelings of brokenness and lack.

The center column corresponds to the *terua*, whose sound is so broken that it is whole. The central column is associated with faith and prayer.

It is taught in the Kabbalah that when we reach our truest prayer of the heart, all our brokenness is brought to wholeness in the realization of complete oneness and unconditional love at the root of all creation.

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