

## ROSH HASHANAH SERVICE TIMES

Friday, September 18	Ma'ariv	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, September 19	Shacharit	9:00 a.m.
Sunday, September 20	Shacharit	9:00 a.m.
	Tashlikh	following services

*Social Hall behind St. Andrew's Church  
Corner of Hampton & Union Streets, Sag Harbor*

### Words to know for the Yamim Noraim

#### **shanah tovah**

When we wish each other a shanah tovah, a good year, we think of the Hebrew word shanah, or year, and extend greetings for a good year. But the Hebrew root shin, nun, heh has another meaning as well, from the verb le-shanot, to change. Further, the same root, shin, nun, heh, also denotes repetition, as in the name of the fifth book of the Torah, Mishneh Torah, the repetition of the Torah.

In other words, a shanah tovah, a good year, is a year of le-shanot, of change, of doing things differently and better. And it also denotes a year of repetition, of relearning all the old lessons that our tradition of truth and wisdom has been teaching for many centuries.

Shanah is a unique word. And may the new shanah be a unique year, one in which there is both repetition of the old, and change for the better.

Rosh Hashanah Readings: Inspiration, Information and Contemplation by Rabbi Dov Perets Elkin

#### shofar

We're all familiar with the *shofar* (or *shopfar*)- שופר - the ram's horn blown on Rosh HaShana. What is the origin of the term?

"*Shofar*... Judaism: A trumpet made of a ram's horn, blown by the ancient Hebrews during religious ceremonies and as a signal in battle, now sounded in synagogue during Rosh Hashanah and at the end of Yom Kippur. Etymology: Hebrew *shofar*, ram's horn; akin to Akkadian *sapparu*, *sappar*, fallow deer... from Sumerian *segbar*, fallow deer." (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.)

Akkadian and Sumerian are two long-extinct languages once spoken, in the millennia before the Common Era, in what is now called Iraq and historically known as Mesopotamia or Babylonia. Akkadian belonged to the Semitic family. Until recently, Sumerian was considered one of those rare tongues, like Basque, for which linguists were unable to find relatives at all. Since the 1970s, however, an impressive body of evidence has accumulated, linking it to the Dravidian languages of southern India, such as Tamil. We are told, then, that our *shofar* derives its name from the Sumerian word for a fallow deer. This may not seem like much of a problem to you, but having looked into it, I can assure you that it is. The fallow deer, *Cervus dama*, is a medium-sized

ruminant, originally native to West Asia and the Mediterranean region of Europe, which stands about a meter high at the shoulder and has broad, palmate antlers. In a photograph, these look like two narrow branches that end in large, spiky leaves. You could make drummer's sticks from the branches and bone cymbals from the leaves, but I doubt whether you could make a *shofar* from either. How, then, did the *segbar* get to be the shofar's etymological ancestor?

My research suggests two possible answers, one taking us westward from Babylonia to ancient Palestine, the other eastward to India. The westward path is the simpler one. We have in biblical Hebrew the word *tsafir*, meaning a male goat. Since the horns of goats, as of rams, make excellent shofars, it seems logical to connect *tsafir* with *shofar*; to derive both from Akkadian *sapparu*, and to assume that in the course of time and distance, as often happens when words age and change languages, the Sumerian-Akkadian word for "fallow deer" came to designate in Hebrew first a goat, then a goat's horn and then a ritually used ram's horn. Indeed it's even possible, as we shall see, that Sumerian *segbar* already meant "ram" in ancient Babylonia.

Yet traveling eastward suggests another possibility, too. This has to do with *Cervus unicolor*, the *sambar* or *sambur*, a wild deer found widely in India and elsewhere in Asia. The *sambar* is a large animal, much bigger than the fallow deer, and it is likely that its name, traced to Sanskrit *sambara*, ultimately derives from, or is connected to, Sumerian *segbar*.

Does the *sambar* have horns suitable for shofars? Not at all. Its antlers are branched like the fallow deer's, though without the latter's palmate endings, and could not easily be turned into wind instruments. The *sambar* does have something else, though: a distinctive warning or distress call, described as an "alarming foghornlike noise," which is sounded upon the detection of predators. Its most dangerous Asian enemy is the tiger, and sambars are valuable aids, used by Asian safari guides, for locating tigers, since they most frequently voice their alarm when one is in sight.

Can the Sumerian *segbar*, then, have been not the fallow deer but the sambar, its name given to the *shofar* because of its unusual warning blast? Scholars could have told us more about the *segbar* had they recovered from the ruins of an ancient Sumerian temple in Ur, dated to about 2200 BCE, the sculptures or drawings spoken of by the priestess Enhedu Anna. The priestess described them in a hymn, the text of which was found at the site. One line of this hymn goes, *E an-se seg-bar ki-se dara-mas*, translated by the Indian Sumerologist K. Loganathan as, "Temple [i.e., the sculptures or drawings in this part of the temple are]: at the top, a wild ram; at the bottom, a deer." Loganathan renders *segbar* as "wild ram" because he takes it to be a cognate of Tamil *cemmari*, "sheep," while relating *dara-mas* to Tamil *taaraimaan*, "striped deer." Yet had he chosen to compare *segbar* with Sanskrit *sambara*, he might have reached a different conclusion. Alas, the drawings or sculptures to which the hymn referred are lost, so that we never will know just what a *segbar* was. (The German Semiticist B. Landsberger, in his *Die Fauna des alten Mesopotamien*, guessed that it was a Thar or *Hermitragus jemlahicus*, a magnificent goatlike creature of Asia with eminently shofarlike horns.)

At any rate, the *shofar* you hear blown this Rosh Hashanah almost certainly will have been made from the horn of a domestic male sheep - unless, that is, you attend a synagogue frequented by Yemenites, whose shofar traditionally comes from an antelope called the kudu. Kudus are much more like fallow deer and sambars than like sheep... but let's not get started all over again!

Klein connects *shofar* to Akkadian *shapparu*, but he translates it as "wild goat", which is obviously an easier animal to identify the shofar with than a fallow deer. Moreover, Klein does not derive *tzafir* ריפצ - he-goat from *sapparu*, but instead relates it to the Arabic *dafara* - "he leapt" - therefore it would literally mean "the leaping animal."

Klein provides two derivatives of *shofar* - *shfoferet* תרפופט and *shafir* ריפפ. In Talmudic times, *shfoferet* meant a pipe or a tube, and in modern Hebrew it also means a receptacle, or receiver -

like the handset of a phone. Interestingly, while Klein and others derive *shfoferet* from *shofar*, the [RaN](#) on Masechet Rosh HaShana reverses that etymology. He brings a halachic proof (brought down also in Orach Chaim 586:1) that a *shofar* must come from a hollow horn (as opposed to a deer's antlers for example) because *shofar* derives from *shfoferet*, which indicates hollowness.

*Shafir* means the amniotic sac, which surrounds the developing embryo (and later fetus), and *mei shafir* מֵי שִׁפִּיר refers to the amniotic fluid. The word derives from *shofar* from its tube like function.  
<http://www.balashon.com/search/label/tishrei>

## teshuva

The Hebrew word teshuva is commonly translated in English as "repentance," but this does not convey its full meaning. Teshuvah is both broader and deeper than repentance, as reflected in its more literal definition: "return."

Thus, teshuvah embodies a lifelong journey back in time. It is a process of unflinching soul-searching that emerges from a pervading sense of spiritual disquiet, rather than simply a pang of guilt. We feel the need to look back - and to go back - because we are alienated from ourselves and from the world.

The "return" route that each of us will take will depend on who and where we are in life. The uniqueness of our personalities logically ensures that each person will follow his or her own path, and that we will have no traveling companion on whom to rely. Fortunately, the Gates of Heaven are numerous, so that each of us may lay claim to our own portal, as long as our desire to go through it - that is, to repent and return - is sufficiently sincere.

The urge to repent grows out of the realization that it is necessary to change. Lamenting our past wrongdoing will not serve us, for contact with evil is inescapable. We must avoid, too, pondering the past and reliving it as it happened - complete with faults and mistakes. Rather, we should meditate on it, as it ought to have been. The main thrust of teshuvah is not only to redeem, but also to rebuild the past. <http://www.jewishaz.com/jewishnews/030926/teshuvah.shtml> **Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz** "Teshuvah demands radical, ongoing change"

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Lorraine and Herb Schottenfeld

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Rosh Hasahnah initiates the Aseret Yimei Teshuvh commonly translated as the 'Ten Days of Repentance.' I would like to suggest that for these days to have a new dimension of meaning we translate them as the 'Ten Days of Searching, Twisting, and Turning,' of wrestling with our souls and trying desperately to find new meaning to our existence. **Rabbi Marshall Meyer**

Shana tova u'metuka. A gut b'bentsht yahr.

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