

Temple Solel Believes In the Mystery of the Shofar

By Shelley Pawlyk

My former Rabbi was inspired by the memory I shared with him about the time I brought my Yemenite shofar back from Israel for the first time and it continues to demonstrate the mysteries contained in this ancient vessel used by our people since Biblical times. There are texts describing how the ram's horn was used to sound an alarm of war, but in more modern applications, we use it to call in the new year, Rosh Hashanah. However, who owns a shofar or knows how to blow it nowadays?

In 2003, a group and I returning from Israel found ourselves in unexpected additional security lines at the massive Frankfurt airport while connecting with our flight to the U.S. People were being more carefully searched than we had noticed before and it was intimidating. I placed the beautiful burgundy velvet bag containing my recently acquired treasure, a thirty-inch polished Yemenite shofar with pink and brown coloring on the x-ray belt. Before it went through the dark tunnel, the Security Officer rescued it, but startled me when she abruptly asked, "Vas is das?" (What is this?) I answered, "Ist ein instrument." She shockingly stated, "Play it." I dared reply, "It is very loud." Changing to the tone of an order she said, "Play it." I answered, "Okay - Schon gut (very good)," then turned to my friend and said, "Here we go.

Let's hold the longest and loudest Tekiah Gedolah we possibly can without passing out." That wonderful day in Frankfurt – in the midst of international airport chaos, loud talking, babies crying, and frustrated voices – came forth the sweetest, yet most powerful, mysterious sounds we usually only hear at Rosh Hashanah each year. Following the blast, it became so instantly quiet you could have heard our hearts beating out of our chests. Then, an outburst of cheers and clapping ensued for what felt like minutes. It is an experience we will never forget, lest we forget, what happened to our ancestors during the Holocaust who may have even placed this request from their heavenly locations – to hear the mystery of the shofar once more.

I am also inspired by a story told by another friend when she visited the Auschwitz Concentration Memorial site in Poland during a similar timeframe. Much braver than I am, she carries her shofar from country-to-country like a weapon so our Jewish voices are heard in some of the darkest places in the world. Not one to stay on the designated path, she asked those in charge if she could



Max Mannheimer at Auschwitz

step away from the group of tourists. A person pointed toward what looked like an empty area of the camp and said, "Look over there." She and her daughter wandered towards an older gentleman they saw in the distance, to discover he was Holocaust survivor Max "Moshe" Mannheimer. In 1943, Max's entire family was deported to Auschwitz through Theresienstadt. He was plagued by traumatic memories due to the loss of nearly his entire family, but committed to the work of the Dachau Concentration Camp community and remained its chairman from 1988 until his death in 2016 at age 96. It is stated that "Dachau Concentration Memorial Site mourns for this man,

who like no other put his all into the struggle to keep the memory of the Holocaust from being forgotten, while at the same time acting as a conciliator."

My friend gained the courage to ask his permission to blow the shofar. He said yes. She stood in front of him shielding him from the sun, and forced her breath through the instrument, just like we did in Frankfurt. However, this time the result were tears streaming down Max's face and then he whispered in

her ear (pictured), "Thank you. Thank you. You know; I didn't believe there was a God, but I believe I was wrong. God helped



me through it all."

We hope you will come join us at our annual Chanukah Celebration featuring The Ruach at 7 PM on Friday, December 27. Bring your chanukiah and some friends.

For more information see templesolelSC.org, write us at info@templesolelSC.org or call 803-610-1707. Temple Solel holds regular Shabbat services at 7 PM on the second and fourth Fridays of each month at Belair UMC Family Life Center, 8095 Shelley Mullis Rd., Fort Mill, SC 29707. ☆

Although the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is observed because it is a decree of the Torah, still it has a deep meaning, as if saying: "Wake up from your deep sleep, you who are fast asleep ... search your deeds and repent; remember your creator ... examine your souls, mend your ways and deeds. Let everyone give up his evil way and bad plans."

—Maimonides, Mishnei Torah: Laws of Repentance 3:4