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The elk aren't the only ones bugling at this time of year. A coincidence? I wonder. I love the sound of those distinctive September songs. On the cooler nights, I pull out an extra blanket for my wife so she won't mind the window left wide open. I don't want to miss those high-pitched, deep-throated vocalizations. They are part whine, part wine-and-dine, and all proclamation to world "Here I am! Here, I AM!" Being from the East Coast, it is harder to bemoan the 'modest' Colorado fall color when the elk come a-caroling.

And that is exactly what those fall elk calls feel like to me. They are like holiday carols. Those of us in the Jewish community are entering the heart of our holiday season. We call it the High Holidays since we have five major holidays within a 30 day span. This coming Friday night, September 18, is like the Jewish equivalent of Christmas Eve. We call it Rosh HaShanah, "Head of the [New] Year." According to tradition, the first day of the seventh lunar month is the anniversary of the birth of Adam, the first human being. It is the birthday of humanity and the conceived world. It is the anniversary of our shared origins.

And so what do we do? We celebrate, for two days even. We gather together. We sing. And we blow...what are those silly, little birthday party kazoos called, the ones with the colorful paper tubes that unroll with a rapid squeal of surprise? Well, the shofar, a hollowed out ram's horn fit for trumpeting, is somewhat more dignified than that, but I suppose it is the same idea. The blowing of the shofar [rams' horn] is the prominent symbol of Rosh Hashanah, and perhaps the High Holiday season. Its resonance invokes the battles of Joshua, the testing of Abraham and Isaac, and the 'Big Bang' [or "Let there be light!"] of the origins of our world.

The Shofar pitches are meant to pierce the armor of our apathy and ego-driven excuses and armor. They represent an urging in our ears to return to the paths and purposes for which we were created, to right the wrongs we have wrought and restore balance and harmony in our individual and collective lives. On Rosh HaShanah, the sound of the shofar calls us home.

And what does the shofar sound like when it is blown? Well, it sounds remarkably like the bugle of an elk. Coincidence? I think not. Though my family and I are relative newcomers to Evergreen, we are thoroughly at home here. Our neighbors and our congregation, they definitely did their part. Still, how welcoming and comforting it has been, that the Jews are not the only ones bugling at this time of year.

May you too be blessed this season, as we listen and learn together from the sacred sounds of elk and shofar. *L'Shanah Tovah.*