Elul is the month leading up to Rosh HaShanah. Each day during the month, a different Temple Beth Torah congregant will share a High Holiday reflection to help us prepare for this season of prayer, repentance and tzedakah.

Tekiah

Jody Siegel

The High Holy Days have always been a little bit extra special for me. The reason is this: I was born on September 16, 1971, and as such, there have been several years when my birthday has fallen on Yom Kippur or even Rosh Hashanah. Perhaps the most special was in 2002 when we were visiting my father-in-law in North Carolina for the High Holy Days, and it was one such year when my birthday fell on Yom Kippur. My husband (then fiancé) presented me with a beautiful tallit and matching kippah made in Israel as my birthday present, embroidered with Israeli landscapes in the colors of the native Israeli crops.

On a subsequent birthday/High Holy Day season (it may have been 2004, when my birthday fell on Rosh Hashanah), my mother presented me with another special gift - my very own shofar, nestled in a wooden felt-lined box she made and engraved herself. I am still learning to blow it properly myself, but this gift always brings back childhood memories of my mother blowing the shofar in the temples where I grew up - first Temple Emanu-El in New Hyde Park (now Temple Tikvah), and then the rest of my growing up at Community Reform Temple in Westbury. My mother was - and still is - an expert shofar blower, having played the trumpet in her youth. She also was well-schooled in the correct articulation of each call, always blowing precisely nine staccato notes for the T’ruah, as prescribed, to equal the total duration of the three Sh’varim calls. Community Reform Temple used to do a very powerful shofar ritual wherein the blowers would be placed throughout the sanctuary, from front to back, and as each call was sung, the blowers would play them in slightly
staggered succession. This resulted in an eerily moving echo sound very much like I imagine the ancient echo of the shofar blast bouncing against the slopes of Mount Sinai. And then - and THEN - when the T'kiah G'dolah would sound, staggered one right after the other...it was truly a magnificent thing to behold. Even now, every time I hear the T'kiah G'dolah, it brings tears to my eyes with its power.

I have celebrated the High Holy Days in many places - Temple Emanu-El, Community Reform Temple, Central Synagogue in Rockville Centre, Port Jewish Center (my uncle’s temple in Port Washington), a temple up in Albany where I went to college, and Temple Beth Shalom, my father-in-law’s temple in Cary, North Carolina. It is lovely to now be able to attend services as a member of Temple Beth Torah. But one thing is missing here that I had at every other temple - an instrumental rendition of the Kol Nidrei on Erev Yom Kippur. So, someday, I hope to be ready to play for the congregation the astoundingly beautiful Kol Nidrei on my violin. It isn’t ready yet, but I have begun and will continue to work on it, and plan to be the presenter of this gift during my birthday season to all of YOU in the near future, ken y’hi ratzon!

*Jody Siegel, member of TBT with husband Chris and daughters Bethany and Shayna.*

Would you like to share your story? It can be a High Holiday memory, a first experience or a ritual that is special to you at this time of year. Send your stories to [raysusie@gmail.com](mailto:raysusie@gmail.com)  
If you missed any of the previous Elul Stories you can go to [www.tbtny.org](http://www.tbtny.org) (media galleries/elul stories).