

Parashat *Ha'azinu* begins with Moshe Rabbenu invoking the heavens as witness: "הַאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם -Listen, O Heavens!"

The root of the word *ha'azinu* means to listen; through *ha-ozen*, the ear, to hear it.

I have the great good fortune to spend two days a week caring for my grandson, Avi. Avi is nearly two years old, and is in a constant state of discovery and wonder at the world around him. He often points to his ear and announces proudly, I hear!

I thought about Avi on Sunday, as I stood at Vilas Park, outdoors and wearing a mask, and heard Steve Kessler sound the shofar. I have heard the shofar many times, from Rosh Hashanah mornings at Ahavas Sholem Congregation in Sheboygan, as I stood clutching my mother's hand to the final tekiah gedolah ending Yom Kippur to weekday mornings during Elul, to last Sunday in the park. Nothing ever meant more to me during tekiat shofar than my own days as a young parent, standing in the synagogue, hearing my beloved husband, z"l, announce the notes and holding Gila's hand, and holding little Yonah close so he wouldn't be frightened, and watching my children's faces as they heard the shofar.

That changed last Sunday. Since March of this year, I have been in my own state of discovery and wonder at our world around us, as Rabbi Forester and our professional and lay leadership, as klei kodesh and their balebatim all over the world, have done their utmost to bring kedushah into our lives in so many ways and in many formats. People have made decisions that at one time may have seemed inconceivable. They made those decisions and make those decisions for their kehilot, for their congregations, and for all of us. For someone who likes to talk as much as I do, I will never have adequate words to express my gratitude.

Just as I held my young children close so they wouldn't be frightened by an unfamiliar and loud shrill sound, so we are held close at these unsettled times by the strength of our tradition, and those who help bring it close. I was overwhelmed on the first day of Rosh Hashanah by Rabbi Diamond's comment that we had the mishkan in the desert, and now we have shul in the parking lot. Everything is different, nothing is what we had expected, but lamrot hakol, despite everything, it's still us, and it is still shul. I was equally overwhelmed by hearing the shofar at Vilas Park. Was it anything I had experienced before? No. I was outside, I was wearing a mask, and people were properly distanced. But, was it still Rosh Hashanah? Yes. Was it still the shofar, and did I hear it? Yes. Unequivocally, yes.

After I heard the shofar, I went to see my family, and Avi was up from his afternoon nap. His parents, my Yonah, and my dear daughter in law Megan were getting ready to bring him to the park to hear the shofar, and my heart was full.

I wish all of you shabbat shalom, shana tova, u'g'mar hatimah tovah.