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**Rosh Hashana:
Thwarting the Satan for Shalom Bayit
Rabbi Jeffrey Fox
Rosh Yeshiva, Maharat**

One of the central features of all Jewish holidays is family. Meaningful time spent together has the ability to reconnect us to each other, and our roots. These experiences remind us where we came from and perhaps allow us to envision where we might go. In shul, we read of the challenges of Avraham, Sara, Hagar, Yitzchak and Yishmael. There is something comforting in the awareness that even those who were capable of reaching unprecedented spiritual heights are still subject to conflict at home. Yet, it makes me wonder what the Torah is meant to convey about family on Rosh ha-Shana.

Perhaps the Torah reading, and its reference to the shofar, is a prayer for *shalom bayit* (peace in the home). The gemara in Rosh ha-Shana (16a-b) asks why we sound the shofar both when sitting and standing. In response to this question, we learn that one of the functions of the shofar is *כדי לערבב השטן* *in order to confuse Satan*.

Despite the fact that I do not connect deeply to the concept of the Satan, the Satan plays a fascinating role in the *akeida* story. In *Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer* (32), it is explained that the evil angel is disappointed that Avraham passed the test of the *akeida*, and so he supplies Sara with misinformation. "Did you hear what happened?" Satan asks Sara. And the Midrash continues:

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| Your elderly husband took Isaac and slaughtered him on an altar. Immediately Sara began to cry and moan. [She cried] three times like the three <i>tekiot</i> , and her soul departed and she died. | אמר לה לקח אישך הזקן את יצחק ושחטו על גבי המזבח מיד התחילה שרה לבכות ומיללת שלשה יבבות כנגד שלשה תקיעות ופרחה נשמתה ומתה |
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Avraham and Sarah never communicate after the traumatic events of the binding of Isaac. The family has been torn asunder, only to come back together at Sara's funeral. Maybe this is the Satan that we aim to thwart on Rosh ha-Shana. If only we could stop this evil messenger from tricking Sara into thinking that Avraham had actually slaughtered their son, maybe, just maybe,



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there could have been a rekindling of the love that they once shared.

And so, in a very deep way, the shofar can be seen as a call for families not to forsake one another. Don't let the Satan get in the way of the most important relationships in your lives - make the phone call, visit your family, carve out the time. When we blast the shofar on Rosh ha-Shana may we call commit to rekindling those valuable relationships that enhance meaning in our lives.



Rabbi Jeffrey S. Fox, Rosh HaYeshiva of Maharat, was the first graduate of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. Upon graduation he served as the Rabbi of Kehilat Keshet: The Community Synagogue of Tenafly and Englewood for seven years. In Rabbi Fox's tenure at Keshet, the community grew three-fold from thirty families to nearly one hundred. During that time Rabbi Fox also taught at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah as well as the Florence Melton Adult Education School in Bergen County. He also served on the board of the Synagogue Leadership Initiative of the UJA of NNJ. Rabbi Fox is a Senior Rabbinic Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute and has also been a member of the faculty of the Drisha Institute, the Florence Melton Adult Education School in Westchester County, and Hadar.