

## Rabbi's Column – October 21, 2019

This past Yom Kippur, as Neilah was approaching, somebody asked how I figured out the time for shofar blowing, as it seemed dark even before then. So here is a real life exercise in figuring out timing for Yom Kippur.

Next year Kol Nidrei is Sunday, September 27. The important date for shofar blowing and break fast is therefore Monday, September 28. According to the computer, sunset that date in my neighborhood will be 6:45 p.m. It is traditional to subtract 18 minutes to find out when candle lighting time is, and add about 1 hour to that for the three visible stars which mark Havdalah time. For these dates then it would be 6:28 for candle lighting and 7:28 for Havdalah. Rounding up, that would get a 7:30 shofar blowing time.

The reason I was told to subtract 18 minutes was because that was how long the sun's light took to reach earth. I trusted my source, and only verified as I am typing this. Turns out they were 10 minutes off - it appears to be 8 minutes and some seconds only for the light to travel that far - the 10 minutes provided an extra cushion to begin Shabbat or Yom Tov. So 18 works because the letters for 10 and 8 can mean "life", which seems like a good number to use on Yom Kippur, whether the sun's light actually takes that long or not.

But it does get kind of dark fairly soon after sunset, and since we begin Kol Nidrei at 7:00, I use a slightly different set of figures. I add 18 minutes to sundown, which in this case would get us to 7:03. In the past I would have gone to the nearest quarter hour after this time, which would get us to 7:15 (This is how I arrived at the 7:00 projected time this past year.) Now that I know about the extra 10 minutes, I will be rounding down instead of rounding up, and the afternoon service times will be the same in 2020 as they were in 2019 - 5:00 for Mincha, 6:00 for Neilah and 7:00 for Shofar Blowing.

One thing we can take from the book of Ecclesiastes - just as the rivers flow into the sea and the sea is never full, so too is it impossible for the world to be full of too much kindness, so do your part to be one of the rivers sending kind acts towards the sea of the world.