

BitterSweet New Year

By Hayden (they/them)|Published in *At the Intersection of Queer and Jewish*, Keshet, 2022

I knew I didn't want to wear a skirt, I wanted to wear pants and a shirt so I did.

I added extra eyeliner and a pair of earrings for some flair and I was ready to go
I looked like the definition of gender confusion

and envy mixed into a queer Jew
I got into shul and couldn't figure out what I had done was wrong

Some people recognized me and said hi and
had quick small talk
Some new people thought I was a man or just
couldn't figure it out
Some people who had known me since I was

2, wearing a dress in a stroller didn't recognize me at all.

The greeting "chag sameach" spoken from the mouth of other men no longer meant "happy holidays." "Shana tova" no longer meant "have a sweet new year". It now all meant "I perceive you as a man".

The mothers chatting to me no longer meant they were being friendly and nice. It now meant "I perceive you as a woman".
But I was there to listen to the Shofar
I stood outside the doors of the sanctuary frozen.

I knew my way to the women's side but what
about all the people who thought I was a man.

Do I go the men's side? Of course not
I was paralyzed with fear outside of the doors
of the shul, unable to decide where to go here

I stood there as they blew the shofar

because

it was a way I could listen to it but I wasn't on

one side or the other
"Tekiah"

Well I guess I am stood here
"shevarim"

I know my dad just looked back at me

wondering why I haven't walked to the

women's side yet
"Teruah"

My heart is pounding the staccato blows on this horn
"Tekiah"

Am I on the right page?
"Shevarim"

I should've gone to the women's side when I
had the chance

Just try to take a deep breath
"Tekiah gedolah"

I never want to go through this experience again

The sound of the shofar bounced off every wall
and out of the doorway where I stood

And it's over
I run

I don't want to be there anymore
The role of judgment should be reserved for
Yom Kippur and not by my fellow Jew.

Fulfilling this mitzvah to listen to the shofar
shouldn't have been this difficult.
It should not