

## ***“EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SHOFAR BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK”***

***BT Rosh Ha-Shanah 16a-b*** (from Sefaria edition)

**Rabbi Abbahu said: Why does one sound a blast with a *shofar* made from a ram’s horn on Rosh Ha-Shana? The Holy One, Blessed be God, said: Sound a blast before Me with a *shofar* made from a ram’s horn, so that I will remember for you the binding of Isaac, son of Abraham, in whose stead a ram was sacrificed, and I will ascribe it to you as if you had bound yourselves before Me.**

**Rabbi Yitzchak said: Why does one sound [tokin] a blast on Rosh Ha-Shana?** The Gemara is astonished by the question: **Why do we sound a blast? The Merciful One states** in the verse: **“Sound [tikku] a *shofar*”** (Psalms 81:4). **Rather**, the question is: **Why does one sound a staccato series of *shofar* blasts [terua] in addition to a long continuous *shofar* blast [tekia]?** The Gemara is still surprised by the question: **Sound a *terua*? The Merciful One states:** “In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a **memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns [terua]**” (Leviticus 23:24). **Rather**, Rabbi Yitzchak asked about the common practice in Jewish communities, which is not explicitly stated in the Torah: **Why does one sound a long, continuous *shofar* blast [tekia] and then a staccato series of *shofar* blasts [terua] while the congregation is still sitting before the silent prayer, and then sound again a *tekia* and a *terua* while they are standing in the *Amida* prayer?** He answers: **In order to confuse the Satan**, for this double blowing of the *shofar* demonstrates Israel’s love for the mitzva, and this will confuse Satan when bringing accusations against Israel before the heavenly court, and the Jewish people will receive a favorable judgment.

**And Rabbi Yitzchak said** (playing on the double meaning of the word מְרִיעִין/*meri'in*, which can mean either sound a *terua* or cause misfortune): **Any year during which, due to some mishap, the *shofar* was not sounded at its beginning will suffer evil and misfortune at its end. What is the reason? Because Satan was not confused**, and was able to put forward accusations so that the Jewish people would be punished.

***The Ram Sacrificed at Mount Moriah*** (From *Tree of Souls* by Howard Schwartz, p. 150)

The ram that Abraham found caught in the thicket at Mount Moriah was one of the ten things created on the eve of the first Sabbath, along with the rainbow of Noah, the staff of Moses, and other precious things.

The ram waited in Paradise for many centuries until that fateful day on Mount Moriah. All this time the ram knew why it had been created, but it was not afraid. Instead, it looked forward to fulfilling its destiny. Then the day came when the angel brought the ram from Paradise to serve as the sacrifice in place of Isaac at Mount Moriah. There, its horns caught in the thicket, it waited for Abraham to set it free. That is why God said to Abraham, “Although your children are destined to be entangled in misfortune, in the end they will be redeemed by the horns of a ram.”

Nothing of the ram that was sacrificed there was wasted. The skin of the ram became Elijah's mantle, the gut was used in David's harp, one horn was sounded by Moses at Mount Sinai, and the other will be blown by Elijah at the End of Days, as it is said, *And in that day, a great ram's horn shall be sounded* (Isa. 27:13).

### ***The Laws of Shofar*** (Rabbi Yitzchak Gornish, excerpted)

Although Rosh Hashanah is referred to as a "Day of Blowing" (*Yom Teruah*), the actual mitzvah is to listen to the shofar sounds. In fact, the blessing on the shofar states, "...to listen to the call of the shofar". Blowing in an area that is "echo prone" may invalidate the performance of the mitzvah even though one blew the shofar properly. This is proof that the essence of the mitzvah is actually hearing every blast of the shofar, not the act of blowing.

Though the majority of *shofrot* originate as rams' horns, the Yemenite community traditionally utilizes the horn of an African antelope called the *kudu*. A ram shofar has the additional benefit of reminding Hashem about the binding of our forefather Yitzchok. However, many horns are kosher for use as a shofar, unless they originate from cattle or a non-kosher species. A shofar has a soft tissue core and a keratin sheath. Cattle horns are one solid piece of bone, which is one reason why they are not used for shofros. Cattle horns also remind Hashem of the sin of the Golden Calf and the Gemara refers to them only as *keren*, as opposed to other horns which are called *shofar* as well.

Any pitch produced by a shofar, whether loud, soft, or dry, is acceptable. If a shofar has a hole, some sources consider it kosher even if it affects the sound; however, the prevailing view is not to utilize such a shofar. If one sealed the hole with a foreign material, even if the sound improves to what it was originally, the shofar is not kosher. If shofar material (like dust or shavings) was utilized to plug the hole, the repair is valid as long as most of the shofar remained whole and the sound reverts to the original. However, in extreme circumstances, even if the sound has been affected due to the patch, the shofar may be used.

If a shofar splits along the entire length, it is no longer kosher. If partially split, then if it is tied tightly it may be used. If mostly split, some authorities allow for gluing.

If one blows with the shofar facing downwards it is unacceptable, since the shofar must be blown in the position that it faces in nature, upwards. One must blow from the narrow end, the side facing the Heavens. If one widens the narrow end and narrows the wide end it will not be a kosher shofar.

A shofar need not be from an animal that was slaughtered properly (by shechita), but may not originate from a non-kosher species. One should not draw on or dye a shofar; however one may etch carvings into the outside of a shofar.

tekiah shevarim

teruah tekiah repeat 3x

tekiah shevarim tekiah repeat 3x

tekiah teruah tekiah repeat 3x

tekiah teruah tekiah gedolah  
(held as long as possible)

Ex. 10-1 tekiah shevarim teruah tekiah gedolah Shofar Calls

Ex. 10-1a 2 Trumpets - like a shofar "Fanfares" from *Candide* Leonard Bernstein

*ff* *sfz*

Ex. 10-1b *Allegro molto* Overture to *Candide* Leonard Bernstein

*ff*

On the Way to an Answer: A Poem for the Shofar  
(Stacey Zisook Robinson)

Do not text me;  
I will not notice,  
And may ignore it  
anyway.  
How can one hundred and forty of  
anything  
compel me  
to answer,  
unless I merely seek  
distraction  
and not return?

Do not leave a message  
that I will not listen to  
I will let the sounds wash over  
me in my  
inattentive attention,  
while I wait  
for the next thing  
to move me  
to the next thing,  
so that I can wait  
for something  
to move me  
again.

Do not call  
Or cry out  
Or speak the words to me  
that You spoke  
to them--  
to Abraham  
who held a knife,

Or his son  
who let him.  
I will not answer.  
I will not hear  
from the depths of this  
wilderness  
that is choked with  
the bits and bytes  
and slings  
and arrows  
of my days.

I will answer  
the sound of the shofar  
that stayed the hand  
that meant to slaughter;  
That rang out  
and tumbled the walls  
that surrounded my heart;  
That sang  
in aching and awesome mystery  
to announce  
the presence of God.  
I will hear  
in this wilderness,  
I will hear  
in my longing  
and I will turn  
and turn again  
and listen,  
and I will  
answer the shofar.