

Introduction

A central mitzvah (commandment) of Rosh Hashanah is the blowing of the shofar. The sound of the shofar, a ram's horn that is played like a trumpet, is a defining symbol of the festival and evokes strong memories for many people.

Shofar in the Torah

Read the text below and answer the questions that follow.

Leviticus 23:24

ויקרא כ"ג:כ"ד

Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a remembrance of the shofar blast on a holy occasion.

דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד
לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זִכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ:

The verse from Leviticus commands the observance of Rosh Hashanah, which is commemorated by blowing the shofar.

- Look at the verse in Hebrew. Two additional names for Rosh Hashanah can be found in this verse. What are the additional names?
- What is the connection between memory and the sound of the shofar? What does the sound of the shofar remind you of?

Shofar in the Talmud

The following text is from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashanah.

Read the text below and answer the questions that follow.

Rosh Hashanah 16a:16

ראש השנה ט"ז א:ט"ז

Similarly, Rabbi Abbahu said: Why does one sound a blast with a shofar made from a ram's horn on Rosh Hashanah? The Holy One, Blessed be He, 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, and I will ascribe it to you as if you had bound yourselves before Me.

אמר רבי אבהו למה תוקעין בשופר של איל אמר
הקדוש ברוך הוא תקעו לפני בשופר של איל כדי שאז-
כור לכם עקידת יצחק בן אברהם ומעלה אני עליכם
כאילו עקדתם עצמכם לפני עצמכם עקדתם.

- What question is Rabbi Abbahu asking?
- According to this text, what will the shofar remind God of? Once God is reminded, what will happen?
- For whose benefit do you think we blow the shofar? For us? For God? For both? Explain your answer.

Shofar Blowing on Rosh Hashanah

Shofar in Primary Sources

Below are three primary sources from the collection of the National Library of Israel. Answer the questions following each picture.



Shana Tova, Germany, 1904

Joseph and Margit Hoffman Judaica Postcard Collection,
Folklore Research Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

- Do you think that this is a good illustration for a Shana Tova card?
- Explain your answer.
- Compare the illustration to the shofar blowing service at your synagogue.
- What is the same?
- What is different?

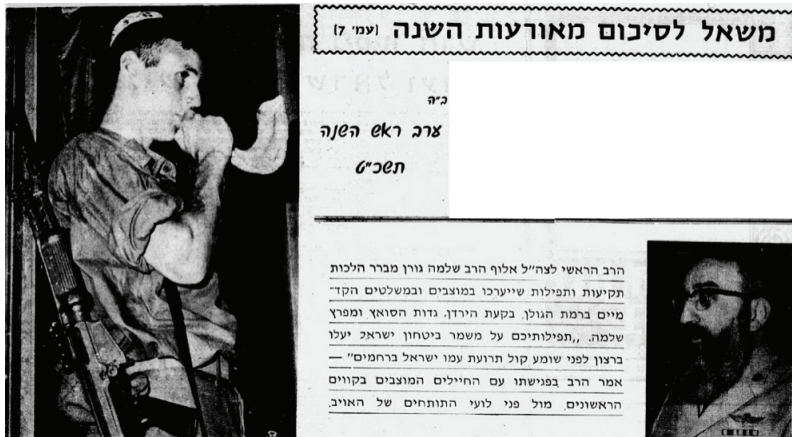


Large Shofar, 1994

National Library of Israel

- Compared to the shofar depicted in the previous Shana Tova card, what is special about this shofar?
- The man holding the shofar is the craftsman who turned the ram's horn into a shofar. How do you think he feels as he holds the shofar up to be photographed?
- What sound do you think this type of shofar makes?

Shofar Blowing on Rosh Hashanah



Shofar Blowing in the IDF, 1968

Jewish Historical Press founded by the National Library and
Tel Aviv University

Partial translation of article:

The Shofar Sounds of those Protecting the Security of Israel
The IDF Chief Rabbi, Major General Rabbi Shlomo Goren, clarifies religious laws regarding shofar blowing and prayers which will take place in outposts in the Golan Heights, the Jordan Valley, the Suez, and the Gulf of Solomon. "Your prayers, while guarding Israel, will rise up to the One who hears the teruah of His people Israel with mercy," said the Rabbi in his meeting with the soldiers who are on the front lines facing the enemy's cannons.

- What types of questions might soldiers on active duty have about fulfilling the mitzvah of blowing the shofar?
- Why might a soldier on guard duty not be able to hear the shofar?
- What are Rabbi Goren's comforting words about soldiers who are unable to hear the shofar on Rosh Hashanah?
- Do you agree with Rabbi Goren?

Wrapping It Up!

- How do you feel when you hear the shofar?
- Do the sounds of the shofar connect you to Rosh Hashanah or teshuva (repentance)?
- What do you think of when you hear the shofar?