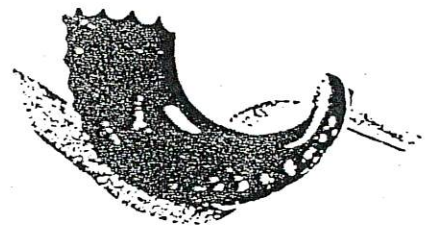
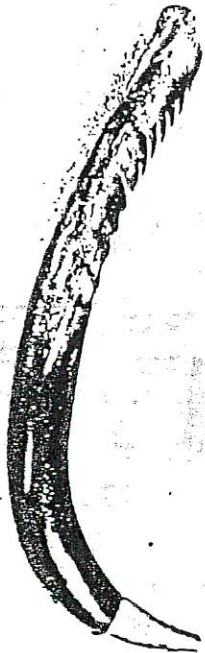
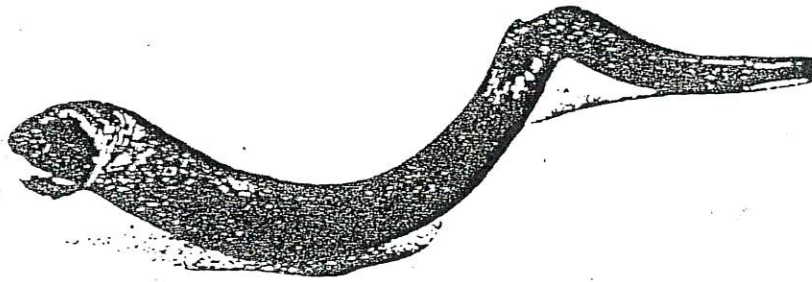


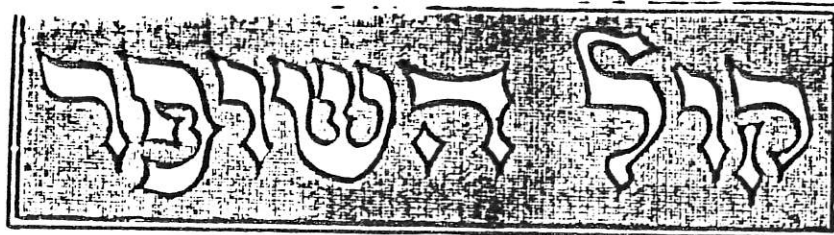
KOL H'ASHOFAR

The Voice of the Shofar



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קול השופר



The Voice of the Shofar

The sound of the Shofar is one of the main experiences that come to mind when we think of the High Holy Day period. It serves as an important symbol of our cultural heritage and religious worship.

The Shofar is the oldest wind instrument. It is described in the Bible, in the Talmud, and in post-Talmudic literature. In ancient times, it was in far greater use than today. The earliest mention of the Shofar is at Mount Sinai during the revelation and the giving of the ten commandments. The blasts of many Shofrot caused the walls of Jericho to crumble. During the times that the Temple stood in Jerusalem it was used to announce the coming of Shabbat and Rosh Hodesh, the coronation of a new king, as an alarm, and to announce the coming of the Jubilee year.

Judaism is rich in symbolism. We can look at how the Shofar is symbolic in many ways. Since it was used in ancient times to announce the coronation of a king, it is used on Rosh HaShana to announce the Kingship of God. Because Rosh HaShana is the beginning of the liturgical year, the sound of the Shofar can remind us of creation itself. The Shofar calls us to repent. During the entire month of Elul, the month before Rosh HaShana, we sound the Shofar at the conclusion of each weekday morning service to prepare us for the Days of Awe that are coming. Since the Shofar announced the giving of the Torah at Sinai, it is a symbol of our special covenant with God. When we hear the sound of the Shofar we are reminded of its use as a battle alarm. In modern times, we are constantly reminded of our long and continuing fight for identity and freedom. When the Shofar's call announced the Jubilee year, it announced freedom for all from slavery and poverty. Today, as a reminder of the Jubilee concept, the Shofar is sounded at the conclusion of Yom Kippur to signify our freedom from sin.

How is a Shofar made? Although a Shofar can be made from the horn of any kosher animal (except a cow or an ox), it is usually made from the horn of ram. When Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, God, perceiving Abraham's faith and devotion, intervened at the last moment by providing a ram for sacrifice. In this sense, the Shofar symbolizes our devotion to God. After being removed from the animal, the horn is boiled until it becomes soft. Next, it is hollowed out, and slightly flattened. The mouthpiece is then shaped. Finally, it is allowed to harden.

Because it is a natural horn, it is difficult to obtain the same sound at all times. Even the most skillful person can sound some Shofrot only in certain positions, and with particular lip tension. The Shofar should be pressed slightly sideways against the lips, with the bell pointed upward and to the right.

When is the Shofar sounded? During the entire month of Elul, the Shofar is sounded at each weekday morning service. On Rosh HaShana, it is sounded

immediately after the Torah service, and then three times in the Musaf service. These segments of Musaf are called, **Zichronot, Malchuyot, Shofarot.**

The person who sounds the Shofar is called **Ba'al Tekiah.** Anyone who is Bar/Bat Mitzvah, capable of producing the sounds, and is knowledgeable about the laws concerning the Shofar can act as Ba'al Tekiah. At the conclusion of this article, you will find excerpts from the Code of Jewish Law regarding the laws of the Shofar.

What are the "calls" of the Shofar? Traditionally, any full, clear sound on the Shofar is ritually acceptable. There are three basic calls. The first is **Tekiah.** This is a simple sound. It is one call, starting on a low note, and rising up. It is always sounded before and after each of the other calls.

The second call is **Sh'varim.** This is three sounds, each one 1/3'd the duration of Tekiah.

The third call is **Teruah.** This is a series of nine short calls, each one 1/3'd the duration of Sh'varim, or 1/9th the duration Tekiah.

Additionally, Sh'varim-Teruah appear as a combination call.

Finally, there is **Tekiah G'dolah.** This is a long Tekiah, which should be no less than three times longer than Tekiah. Many people hold this call as long as possible. Below is a musical rendering of the calls of the Shofar.

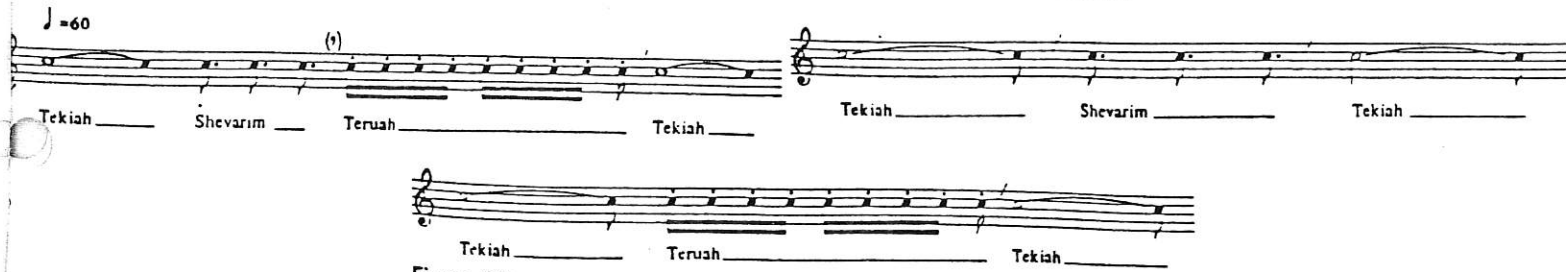
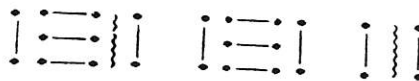


Figure 38a.

Also, some older Siddurim had symbols to represent the calls. Here is an example.



The Parma notation as reproduced in Salomon Sulzer's *Schir Zion*. (center) Graphic signs found in R. Amram's *siddur*. (bottom) Graphic signs found in Saadiah Gaon's *siddur*.

When acting as a Ba'al Tekiah, what do I do? First, there are two Brachot that you need to chant. The melody is provided on the accompanying tape, and the text is provided on the next page. Next, you need to familiarize yourself with the calls. After chanting the the Brachot, listen to the caller (it may be the Rabbi, the Cantor, the Ritual Director, or even a congregant). The caller will call out each of the calls, and you respond with the appropriate call on the Shofar. Try to

stand away from the microphones. The congregation should here the actual voice of the Shofar, not an amplified, artificial sound. Examples of the call patterns for the Shofar service (the one right after the Torah service) and the three sections from Musaf are provided in the following pages. When practicing, you should use these patterns.

Behatzlacha! All the best as you engage in this very important Mitzvah!

Selections from, "The Code of Jewish Law"

2. It is the custom to sound the *shofar* daily during this month,¹⁰¹ beginning the second day of *Rosh Hodesh* and continuing daily after the morning service. We blow *Tekiah*, *Shevarim*, and *Teruah*. The day before *Rosh Hashanah*, the *shofar* is not blown, in order to make a distinction between the voluntary blowing of the *shofar* and the mandatory sounding. The reason for sounding the *shofar* during this month is to move the people to repentance. For the sound of the *shofar* has the quality to stir the hearts and to inspire love, as it is written (Amos 3:6): "Shall a *shofar* be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?" Every day, after the morning and evening prayers, beginning with the second day of *Rosh Hodesh* until *Shemini Atzeret* (eighth day of *Sukkot*), we recite the (Psalm 27) *Ledavid. Adonai ori* (Of David, the Lord is my light and salvation). This is in conformity with the *Midrash* (Shofar Tov): "The Lord is my light" on *Rosh Hashanah*, "and my salvation" on *Yom Kippur*; "for He will hide me in His tent" (verse 5) is a hint of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is also customary to have public recital of Psalms, all in accordance with local custom. Beginning with the month of *Elul* and until *Yom Kippur*, when one writes a letter to his fellow, one should mention either at the beginning or at the end, that he prays for him and wishes him to be inscribed and sealed in the book of good life.

8. During the twelve months of mourning for a father or a mother, one should not officiate as *hazan* on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, nor should he blow the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*, unless there is no one else as qualified as he is. If he is in the first thirty days of mourning for other relatives, then if it had been his prerogative to officiate as *hazan* or to blow the *shofar*, he is allowed to do so, since *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* lift the thirty-day mourning; but if he has not been accustomed to do so, and there is another man just as suitable as he is, he should not be allowed to act as such. During

the entire period when the *Selichot* are said, even on the day before *Rosh Hashanah*, a mourner may act as *hazan*, but not when he observes the first seven days of mourning.

11. The one who is to officiate on the awe-inspiring days, as well as the one who blows the *shofar*, should abstain three days before *Rosh Hashanah* from anything that may cause contamination. They should familiarize themselves as much as possible with the meaning of the prayers, the liturgic poetry, and the laws concerning the blowing of the *shofar*. They should also study inspirational books, which tend to stir the heart of man, and which inculcate awe of the Lord and the glory of His greatness when He rises to judge the world. If we are unable to get a Torah scholar to blow the *shofar*, we should at least get a prompter who is a scholar and versed in the procedure of blowing the *shofar*, so that in the event of an error, he should know what to do. This man should also know how to examine the *shofar* to ascertain whether it is valid.

13. The *shofar* should be preferably sounded as follows: The *Teruah* consists of nine short sounds; the *Shevarim* is of three successive sounds, each being as long as three *Teruah* sounds so that the *Shevarim* is equal to nine sounds. One should be very careful not to protract the *Shevarim* until each one equals nine sounds, for in such an event the precept is not fulfilled, even post facto. The *Tekiot* are simple sounds. In the order of *Tekiah*, *Shevarim*, *Teruah*, *Tekiah*, the sound of each *Tekiah* should be as long as the *Shevarim* and the *Teruah*, that is, the length of eighteen sounds. In the order of *Tekiah*, *Shevarim*, *Tekiah*, each *Tekiah* should be as long as the *Shevarim*, that is, the length of nine sounds; the same in the order of *Tekiah*, *Teruah*, *Tekiah*. In the *Tekiot* preceding the *Musaph* service, the *Shevarim* and the *Teruah*, when they follow one another, should be sounded in one breath; the prompter should, therefore, announce them together: *Shevarim-teruah*. But in the *Tekiot* during the repetition of the *Shemonah esreh*, they should be sounded in two breaths. Nevertheless, no undue pause should be made between them, but they should be sounded in immediate succession, and the prompter should likewise announce them at one time.

14. When the one sounding the *shofar* pronounces the benedictions, the congregation should not respond, *Baruh hu ubaruh shemo* (blessed be He and blessed be His name), but merely listen attentively and after each benediction respond *Amen*. (See chapter 6:9, above.) From there on it is forbidden to make any interruption till after the *Tekiot* during the *Shemoneh esreh*. Therefore, the sexton should not announce. *Shetikah yafah bishecat hatfillah* (silence is proper when praying), although he customarily does so at other times.

15. After each set of the *shofar* blasts during the repetition of the *Shemoneh esreh*, people generally recite, *Ychi ratzon* (may it be Thy will), as it is printed in the festival prayer books. Care should be taken not to pronounce the names of the angels given there. In many communities this prayer is not recited at all, and this is preferable. The principal reason for blowing the *shofar* is to exhort the people to wholehearted repentance. As Maimonides, of blessed memory, said: "Although the blowing of the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah* is an unexplained Scriptural command, its connotation is: 'Awake ye that are sleepy, and ye that slumber awake from your slumber, and ponder your deeds, remember your Creator, and go back to Him in penitence. Ye who miss the truth in your hunt after vanities, and waste your years in seeking after vain things that can neither profit nor deliver, look after your own souls, and improve your ways and your deeds. Let everyone of you abandon his evil ways and thoughts and return to God that He may have mercy on you.'"

16. At the repetition of the *Shemoneh esreh*, when the *hazan* says, *Vaanahnu korcim* (and we bow), it is customary for the congregation to say it with him, and all bow and prostrate themselves. But they are not to fall on their faces, except on *Yom Kippur*, where the *Avodah* (the order of the Temple service) is read. The *hazan* kneels and prostrates himself, but he is not allowed to move from his place during the repetition of the *Shemoneh esreh*; he, therefore, stands at a slight distance from the desk, so that he may be able to bow and prostrate himself without moving from his place, and those who stand near him, assist him to rise. The *hazan* should not blow the *shofar* during the repetition of the *Shemoneh esreh*, unless he is confident that in so doing he will not become confused in his prayers.

17. Concerning the *Tekiot* during the repetition of the *Shemoneh esreh*, different customs prevail, and each community should abide by its customs. There are also different customs concerning the *Tekiot* at the conclusion of the prayers. After all the *Tekiot* have been sounded, in accordance with the local custom, the *shofar* should be hidden, to make certain that no more sounds are made. Even one who is to sound the *shofar* on the second day, is not allowed to blow it on the first day for the purpose of practicing.

18. If a circumcision is to take place at the synagogue, it should be performed after the reading of the *haftorah*, before the sounding of the *shofar*. If it is a Sabbath, the circumcision should take place after *Ashre* (happy are they) is said. If it is necessary to perform the circumcision at the house of the infant's mother, it should be done after leaving the synagogue.

19. One who has already fulfilled his obligation of blowing the *shofar*, may pronounce the benedictions if he has to blow it for the sake of others. Nevertheless, it is more proper that a person who had not yet fulfilled this obligation should pronounce the benedictions. One who sounds the *shofar* for the sake of women, then if he has already fulfilled his obligation, should not recite the benedictions, but a woman should recite them, for according to law, women are exempt from blowing the *shofar*, since it is a positive precept required only at a certain time. Other authorities hold that the one who has already fulfilled his obligation should not blow the *shofar* at all for the sake of women, and if one desires to do so, he must do it before hearing the *Tekiot* at the synagogue, and he should pronounce the benedictions thereon with the intention of fulfilling thereby his obligation. This, however, must not be done during the first three hours of the day, as it is not permissible to blow the

shofar privately at such time. He should either blow the *shofar* for them at the time it is blown at the synagogue, or thereafter, but he should bear in mind while in the synagogue not to be exempted by these *Tekiot*, but only by those which he will sound for the women, and he should say the benedictions thereon. Although he later goes to the synagogue to pray the *Musaph* service, and to hear the *Tekiot* sounded during the repetition of the *Shemoneh esreh*, the interruption does not oblige him to repeat the benedictions, as all the *Tekiot* constitute one precept. A weak woman who cannot abstain from food until after the *Tekiot*, may eat before the *Tekiot*.

26. When the *Ne'ilah* service is concluded, we say *Avinu malkenu* (our Father, our King), even if it is a Sabbath and still day. Then we say once, *Shema yisrael* (hear, O Israel); three times, *Barukh shem kevod malhuto leolam vad* (blessed be His name whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever) and seven times, *Adonai hu ha'elohim* (the Lord, He is God). It is to send off the Divine Presence, to the higher spheres of the seventh heaven. The *hazan* then chants the whole *kaddish* in a joyous tone, after which the *shofar* is sounded once, symbolic of the ascension of the Divine Presence, as it was when the Torah was given on Sinai. For when the Divine Presence ascended, it is written (Exodus 19:13): "When the ram's horn soundeth long," etc., and it is also written (Psalms 47:6): "The Lord is gone amidst shouting, the Lord amidst the sound of the horn." It also commemorates the sounding of the *shofar* on the *Yom Kippur* of the Jubilee year.¹² The *shofar* may be sounded even at twilight when the stars are not yet visible, even on the Sabbath, but it should not be sounded in the daytime. After the sounding of the *shofar*, all say three times, *Lechana! habaah birushalayim* (next year in Jerusalem).

Blessings and "calls" for the Shofar Service after the Torah Service

Before he sounds the shofar, the ba'al tekiah recites the following benedictions. The congregation responds: Amen.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְשַׁמֵּעַ קוֹל שׁוֹפָר.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

תְּקִיעָה שְׁבָרִים תְּרוּעָה תְּקִיעָה

תְּקִיעָה שְׁבָרִים תְּרוּעָה תְּקִיעָה

תְּקִיעָה שְׁבָרִים תְּרוּעָה תְּקִיעָה

תְּקִיעָה שְׁבָרִים תְּקִיעָה

תְּקִיעָה שְׁבָרִים תְּקִיעָה

תְּקִיעָה שְׁבָרִים תְּקִיעָה

תְּקִיעָה תְּרוּעָה תְּקִיעָה

תְּקִיעָה תְּרוּעָה תְּקִיעָה

תְּקִיעָה תְּרוּעָה תְּקִיעָה גְּדוּלָּה

We are seated.

The "call" pattern for all three sections of the Musaf Service are the same. Since the blessings were recited earlier, they are not repeated.

We rise.

תְּקִיעָה שְׁבָרִים תְּרוּעָה תְּקִיעָה
תְּקִיעָה שְׁבָרִים תְּקִיעָה
תְּקִיעָה תְּרוּעָה תְּקִיעָה