

Holy Days, Holy Spaces #2

ובשופר גדול יתקע

A Wake Up Call

אף על פי שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזרת הכתוב רמז יש בו כלומר עורו ישנים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם. אלו השוכחים את האמת בהכלי הזמן ושוגים כל שנתם בהכל וריק אשר לא יועיל ולא יציל, הביטו לנפשותיכם והיטיבו דרכיכם ומעלליכם ויעזב כל אחד מכם דרכו הרעה ומחשבתו אשר לא טובה.

Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying:

Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth in the vanities of time and throughout the entire year, devote their energies to vanity and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts. (Maimonides, Hilchot Teshuva 3:4)

Shofar or Trumpet?

ובהחדש השביעי באחד לחודש מקרא קודש יהיה לכם כל־מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו יום תרועה יהיה לכם:

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded. (Bamidbar 29:1)

עשה לה שתי חצוצרות כסף מקשה תעשה אתם והיו לה למקרא העדה ולמסע את־המחנות:

Have two silver trumpets made; make them of hammered work. They shall serve you to summon [military bodies of] the community and to set the divisions in motion. (Bamidbar 10:2)

Revelation

ויהי ביום השלישי בהית הבקר ויהי קולת ובראים ועגו כבד על־ההר וקל שפר תזק מאד ויחרד כל־העם אשר במתנה:

On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder, and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the horn; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. (Shmot 19:16)

Jubilee and Freedom

וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ שׁוֹפָר תְּרוּעָה בַּתִּקְדָּשׁ הַשְּׂבָעִי בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ בַּיּוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים תַּעֲבִירוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּכָל־אַרְצְכֶם: וְקִדַּשְׁתֶּם אֶת
שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה וַקְרַאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאַרְצְ לְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹגֵל הוּא תִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְשִׁבְתֶּם אִישׁ אֶל־אֶחָזְתּוֹ וְאִישׁ
אֶל־מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ תֵּשְׁבוּ:

Then you shall sound the horn loud; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month—the Day of Atonement—you shall have the horn sounded throughout your land and you shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to your holding and each of you shall return to your family (VaYikra 25:9-10)

Wartime

Let all your troops march around the city and complete one circuit of the city. Do this six days, with seven priests carrying seven shofarot preceding the Ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the shofarot. And when a long blast is sounded on the shofar—as soon as you hear that sound of the shofar—all the troops shall give a mighty shout. Thereupon the city wall will collapse, and the troops shall advance, every man straight ahead.” (Joshua 6:3-5)

When he got there, he had the shofar sounded through the hill country of Ephraim, and all the Israelites descended with him from the hill country; and he took the lead (Shoftim 3:27)

אִם־יִתְקַע שׁוֹפָר בְּעִיר וְעַם לֹא יִתְרַדוּ

When a shofar is sounded in a town,
Do the people not take alarm? (Amos 3:6)

Guerilla Warfare

Watch me,” he said, “and do the same. When I get to the outposts of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all those with me blow our shofarot, you too, all around the camp, will blow your shofarot and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon!’” (Shoftim 7:17-18)

To Crown a King

Then the priest Zadok, and the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada went down with the Cherethites and the Pelethites. They had Solomon ride on King David’s mule and they led him to Gihon. The priest Zadok took the horn of oil from the Tent and

anointed Solomon. They sounded the shofar and all the people shouted, “Long live King Solomon!” (Kings I 1:39)

A Musical Instrument

With trumpets and the blast of the shofar raise a shout before the LORD, the King.
(Tehillim 98:6)

הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתִקְעַת שׁוֹפָר הַלְלוּהוּ בְּגִיטָה וּבְכִנּוֹר:

Praise Him with blasts of the shofar;
praise Him with harp and lyre. (Tehillim 150:3)

Announcements for Good

תִּקְעוּ בַחֲדָשׁ שׁוֹפָר בְּפֶסַח לַיּוֹם תִּגְנוּ:

Blow the shofar on the new moon,
on the full moon for our feast day. (Tehillim 81:4)

Shofarot went out from the court of Rava, and he prohibited [all the fish on that boat].
And shofarot went out from the court of Rav Huna bar Hinnana, and he permitted [the fish]. (Avodah Zarah 40a)

And for Bad

הִעֲזוּ אֲנִי בְּנוֹמָן מִקֶּרֶב יְרוּשָׁלַם וּבִתְקוּעַת תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר וְעַל־בֵּית הַכֶּרֶם שָׂאוּ מִשְׁאֵת כִּי רָעָה נִשְׁקָפָה
מִצָּפוֹן וְשָׂרָר גָּדוֹל:

Flee for refuge, O people of Benjamin,
Out of the midst of Jerusalem!
Blow the shofar in Tekoa,
Set up a signal at Beth-haKerem!
For evil is appearing from the north,
And great disaster. (Jeremiah 6:1)

How are these seven fast days more stringent than the first ones? Rather, the difference is that on these days, they sound the alarm and they lock the stores. With what do they sound the alarm? Rav Yehuda said: With shofarot. (Taanit 14a)

Rashi: תוקעין בשופרות כדי שיכניעו לבם לקול השופר ויהיו נרתעים מחטאתם

Rav Taḥlifa bar Avimi said that Shmuel said as follows: A shofar blast [at the time of the ostracism] makes it binding, and a shofar blast releases it. (Moed Katan 16a)

Rav Hamnuna happened to come to Darumata he heard the sound of a shofar announcing that a person had died in the town. (Moed Katan 27b)

When Does Shabbat Begin?

The Sages taught : They sound six blasts on Shabbat eve The first blast is in order to stop the people from work in the fields. The second blast is to stop those who are working in the city, and to close the stores. The third is to inform them to light the Shabbat light; that is the statement of Rabbi Natan. . . . And he pauses after the third blast for the length of time it takes to fry a small fish or to stick bread to the sides of the oven. And he sounds a *tekia*, and sounds a *terua*, and sounds a *tekia*, and he accepts Shabbat. (Shabbat 35a)

Sign of Authority

After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai instituted that the people should sound [the shofar on Shabbat] in every place where there is a court (Mishnah Rosh HaShanah 4:1)

the Sages taught: Once Rosh HaShana occurred on Shabbat, and all the cities gathered [at the Great Sanhedrin in Yavne]. Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said to the sons of Beteira,]: Let us sound the shofar. They said to him: Let us discuss. He said to them: let us sound it, and afterward, let us discuss. After they sounded, the sons of Beteira said to Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai: Let us discuss. He said to them: The shofar has already been heard in Yavne, and one does not refute a ruling after action (Rosh HaShanah 29b)

A Show of Defiance

I opened the drawer and slipped the shofar into my shirt. I had the shofar, but what if they saw me before I had a chance to blow it? I was still unmarried at the time, and following the Ashkenazic custom, did not wear a *tallit*. I turned to person praying at my side, and asked him for his [tallit](#). My request must have seemed strange to him, but the Jews are a kind people, especially at the holiest moments of the holiest day, and he handed me his *tallit* without a word.

I wrapped myself in the *tallit*. At that moment, I felt that I had created my own private domain. All around me, a foreign government prevails, ruling over the people of Israel even on their holiest day and at their holiest place, and we are not free to serve our Gd; but under this *tallit* is another domain. Here I am under no dominion save that of my

Father in Heaven; here I shall do as He commands me, and no force on earth will stop me. (Moshe Tzvi Segal, The Shofar and the Wall)

Return to the Holy Places

“I am speaking to you from the plaza of the Western Wall, the remnant of our Holy Temple. ‘Comfort my people, comfort them, says the Lord your God.’ This is the day we have hoped for, let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation. The vision of all generations is being realized before our eyes: The city of God, the site of the Temple, the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, the symbol of the nation’s redemption, have been redeemed today by you, heroes of the Israel Defense Forces. By doing so you have fulfilled the oath of generations, ‘If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning.’ Indeed, we have not forgotten you, Jerusalem, our holy city, our glory. In the name of the entire Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora, I hereby recite with supreme joy, Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us in life, who has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this day. This year in Jerusalem – rebuilt! “ (General Shlomo Goren, Chaplain of the Israeli Defense Forces, Western Wall)

Mystical Shofar

One *kavana* (meditation) of shofar blowing associates the sounds with giving, receiving, balance and oneness:

tekia – 1 long sound – giving – א

shevarim – 3 shorter sounds – receiving – ה

terua – 9 very short sounds – balance – ו

tekia gedola – 1 very long sound – oneness – ה

The whole long sound of *tekia* expresses inner joy and thankfulness.

The three broken cries of *shevarim* express brokenness.

The sound of *terua*, so broken it is whole, is the prayer from the depths of our heart revealing the always flowing divine goodness.

The very large triangle at the top represents the final very long sound of *tekia gedola*. This represents unconditional love and oneness.

Each of the 100 sounds corresponds to a particular aspect of our inner consciousness. Each progressive sound represents deeper levels of love and spiritual awareness. (Avraham Loewenthal, Kabbalistic artist)

Messianic Moment

וְהָיָה י בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל וְבָאוּ הָאֲבָדִים בְּאֶרֶץ אַשּׁוּר וְהַנִּדְחִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ
לַיהוָה בְּהַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

And in that day, a great ram's shofar shall be sounded; and the strayed who are in the
land of Assyria and the expelled who are in the land of Egypt shall come and worship
GOD on the holy mount, in Jerusalem. (Isaiah 27:13)

תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּצִיּוֹן וְהִרְיעוּ בְּהַר קֹדֶשׁי יִרְגָּזוּ כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ כִּי־בָא יוֹם־יְהוָה כִּי קָרוֹב:

Blow a shofar in Zion,
Sound an alarm on My holy mount!
Let all dwellers on earth tremble,
For the day of GOD has come!
It is close— (Joel 2:1)