

10 Degrees of Elevation: A Shofar Primer



There is a Torah commandment to blow the Shofar on Rosh Hashana, and thus, of course, we must do so irrespective if we understand the reasoning and the depth behind this exalted Mitzvah or not.

However, the commentaries often provide more depth into understanding the Mitzvos, to help give us a better taste and understanding into some of the complexities built into the Mitzvos that we are fortunate to have been commanded to fulfill by our Creator, the Melech Malchei Hamelachim, Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The Mitzvah of Shofar is no exception, and indeed, there are **10 ideas taught to us by Rav Sa'adia Gaon, and quoted by the Abudreham, to help us better relate to the Mitzvah of Shofar**, and why we were commanded to blow it on Rosh Hashana, in a way that will make this simple yet lofty Mitzvah more understandable to our often shallow minds.

1) **Rosh Hashana is the beginning of creation.** It was customary at the beginning of the reign of a new king to blow trumpets and other horns to herald the new reign of the ruler and to ensure that all the subjects of the kingdom “heard” about this important milestone. So too, we blow the shofar to herald the “new” reign of Hashem, our King at the new “beginning” of his reign.

2) **Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the 10 days of repentance**, which culminate with Yom Kippur. The Shofar is blown as a proclamation to all to do Teshuva, and all who fail to get the message and fail to do Teshuva have only themselves to blame for not heeding the call of Teshuva. This was also common at the beginning of the reign of a new king; they would announce the edicts of the king and give everyone a chance to fall in line, or else.

3) **The shofar blasts remind us of “Ma’amad Har Sinai”**, the tremendous display of Hashem’s power that was evident at Sinai. There, there were strong Shofar blasts and our forefathers proclaimed “Na’aseh V’Nishma”. So too on Rosh Hashana when we hear the blasts of the shofar, we must reaffirm our commitment to uphold the Torah at all costs, Na’aseh V’Nishma!

וקל שפר חזק מאד ויחרד כל־העם אשר במחנה - Shemos 19:16

4) **The Shofar reminds us of the words of our holy prophets**, whose penetrating rebukes and chastisements are likened to Shofar blasts. When we remember their words, it is supposed to bring us to repent.

ושמע השמע את־קול השופר ולא נזהר - Yechezkael 33:4

5) **The Shofar reminds us of the Churban Bais Hamikdash**, the destruction of our holy temple (May it be rebuilt speedily in our days), and the battle cry of our enemies who destroyed it and exiled us. When we hear the blasts we should beseech Hashem to rebuild our Bais Hamikdash to its eternal glory.

לִבִּי לֹא אֶחְרִישׁ כִּי קוֹל שׁוֹפָר שְׁמַעַת נַפְשִׁי תְרוּעַת מִלְחָמָה - Yirmiyahu 4:19

6) **The blasts of the Shofar, the ram's horn, remind us of Akeidas Yitzchok**, where our forefather, Yitzchok Avinu was ready to sacrifice his life for Hashem, and the ram that was stuck by its horn, which was sacrificed in his stead. We too must be ready to give our lives for Hashem, and to live our lives in a way that brings Kiddush Hashem. Invoking the zechus of Yitzchok is also a tremendous benefit to us on Rosh Hashana that our judgement will be a good one.

7) **Hearing the shofar blasts naturally cause trembling and fear to grip us** and thus a vehicle to bring us to broken-heartedness before Hashem, and make us reach out to Hashem to save us.

אִם-יִתְקַע שׁוֹפָר בְּעִיר וְעַם לֹא יִחְרְדוּ - Amos 3:6

8) **The Shofar blasts remind us of the upcoming Yom Hadin Hagadol**, the ultimate judgement day, with the arrival of Mashiach, and bring us to teshuva, for fear of still having unresolved sins when he arrives.

קְרוֹב יוֹם-ה' הַגְדוֹל, יוֹם שׁוֹפָר וְתְרוּעָה עַל הָעַרְמִים הַבְּצֻרֹת וְעַל הַפְּנוֹת הַגְּבוּהוֹת - Tzfaniah 1:14-16

9) **The Shofar blasts remind us of the impending "Kibutz Galuyos"**, the ingathering of all of Klal Yisroel from all four corners of the earth, as a precursor to Mashiach's arrival, and to cause us to yearn and crave for this to happen already. This event will take place with great fanfare and with Shofar blasts. (See text of the 10th bracha of Shemona Esrei, Teka B'Shofar Gadol....

בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה | בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גְּדוֹל וְזָבְאוּ הָאֲבָבִים בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשׁוּר וְהַגְּדִיחִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָהּ בְּהָר הַקָּדֵשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַם - Yeshaya 27:13.

10) **The Shofar blasts remind us of Techiyas Hameisim**, the resurrection of the dead which will happen during Yemos Hamashiach, may it be soon, and hearing the shofar should strengthen our belief in Hashem and our firm belief that He will awaken the dead when He deems it the right time to perform this ultimate miracle displaying His complete and total control over every aspect of His universe. Shofar blasts will be part of the awesome display of the no-longer-concealed Oneness of Hashem at Techiyas Hameisim.

כָּל-יֹשְׁבֵי תְבֵל וְשִׁכְנֵי אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן-גּוֹס הָרִים תִּרְאוּ וְכִתְקַע שׁוֹפָר תִּשְׁמְעוּ - Yeshaya 18:3

Ain Od Milevado!

If we study and internalize all of the aforementioned ideas and incorporate them into our fulfillment and understanding of the Mitzvah of Shofar, we will have no choice but to be moved and elevated to a better spiritual place on Rosh Hashana, and hopefully for the entire New Year, and New Days of Mashiach ahead!

בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה לכל בית ישראל

Questions/Comments? Feel Free To Email Ben@HalachaForToday.com