

# יְהִי לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זְכוֹרֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ

## It Will be a Sabbath, a Memorial Blowing of the Shofar, a Holy Convocation

*“Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.’” (Lev. 23:24)*

*“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet (shofar) shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship יְהוָה in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” (KJV, Isa 27:13).*

## Why Should We Blow the Shofar (or Listen to the Shofar)?

### 1. First and foremost because Scripture (Torah) Commands us to

What better reason, what further rationale do we need? The Torah clearly states:

*“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you are to have a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work; it is a day of blowing the shofar for you.” (Numbers 29:1)*

*“Tell the people of Isra’el, ‘In the seventh month, the first of the month is to be for you a day of complete rest for remembering, a holy convocation announced with blasts on the shofar. Do not do any kind of ordinary work, and bring an offering made by fire to יְהוָה.” (CJB, Lev 23:24-25)*

### 2. For the Good of Israel

Tanna Ben Eliyahu records the words of R'Yehoshua ben Karchah:

- The *shofar* was not created except for the good of Israel. The Torah was given to Israel with the blowing of the *shofar* - as it is written (Ex. 19:19): *“The sound of the shofar continually increased ...”*
- The wall of Jericho collapsed with the blowing of the *shofar* - as it is written (Joshua 6:20): *“And it was when the people heard the sound of the shofar ... that the wall collapsed in its place...”*
- The advent of the Messiah will be announced with the *shofar* - as it is written (Zech. 9:14): *“Then יְהוָה will appear upon them [i.e., Israel], and His arrow will go forth as the lightning; יְהוָה, will blow on the shofar...”*
- The ingathering of the exiles will be accompanied by the *shofar* as it is written (Isaiah 27:13).
- Thus it is written (Isaiah 58:1): *“Shout out loud! Don't hold back! Raise your voice like a shofar! Proclaim to my people what rebels they are, to the house of Ya'akov their sins.”*

### 3. Awake O Sleepers

Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4) writes:

*‘Although the blowing of the shofar on Yom Teruah is a Scriptural decree [and must therefore be observed whether or not one knows the reason behind it], there is an allusion in it. Namely: ‘Awake, O sleepers, from your sleep! Arouse yourselves, O slumberers, from your slumber! Scrutinize your deeds! Return with contrition! Remember your Creator! Those of you who forget the truth in the futilities of the times and let all your years elapse in futility and emptiness ... peer into your souls, improve your ways and your deeds. Each of you should abandon his evil way and his bad thoughts.’*

### 4. External Stimulus

*Chinuch (Mitzvah 405)* follows another line of reasoning. As a physical being man is not always capable of girding himself for the task at hand but most rely upon external stimulants to arouse him to action. This is the reason for the trumpet blasts and war shouts that lead an army into battle. Similarly on *Yom Teruah* when each person stands before the Heavenly Tribunal, he must prepare himself with repentance and contrition. But his heart will rarely initiate this remorse; it must be prodded externally. When he hears the *shofar* call, particularly the broken note *teruah*, he is reminded to break the evil inclination of his heart and to

abandon his lust after worldly desires. When he sees the curved shape of the *shofar*, he is inspired to bend his intransigence and submit to the will of the Creator.

## 5. **Redemption from Egypt**

Still another reason offered for the sounding of the *shofar* on *Yom Teruah* is related to the Exodus from Egypt. According to the Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a), the Israelites in Egypt ceased working as slaves on the day of *Yom Teruah* [six and a half months before they actually left the land]. But it is with the sound of the *shofar* that slaves are set free (see *Leviticus* 25:9-10). Thus the *shofar* is another in a long series of *mitzvot*, each of which is a memorial of the Exodus from Egypt (*Psalms* 81:4).

## 6. **Ten Symbolisms**

R' Saadiah Gaon enumerates ten symbolic meanings alluded to by the *mitzvah* of the *shofar*:

1. *Yom Teruah*, by tradition, marks the anniversary of the world's creation. As such it is also the day on which God's sovereignty over Creation began. Since it is customary to sound the trumpets at the coronation of a new king, we likewise proclaim His sovereignty over us on this day with the sounding of the *shofar*. This is in accord with the verse (*Ps* 98:6): “*With trumpets and shofar sound call out before the King, יהוה*”
2. *Yom Teruah* initiates the Ten Days of Repentance. Just as a king will proclaim a period during which amends can be made before a decree is to be enforced, so does the *shofar* blast proclaim, ‘*Whosoever wishes to repent - let him repent now. If not, let him not complain later.*’
3. At Mount Sinai the people shouted, “*We will do and we will obey*” {*Na’ase v’Nishma*} (*Exodus* 24:7), when they accepted the Torah. At that time, “*...the sound of the shofar continually increased and was very great...*” (*Ex.* 19:19). On *Yom Teruah* the *shofar* reminds us to renew our commitment to **do** and to **obey** (*sh’ma*)
4. The *shofar* reminds us of the admonitions of the prophets and their calls to repentance - as it is stated (*Ezekiel* 33:2-9): “*Ben Adam [i.e., Ezekiel], speak to the children of your people and say to them: 'When I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and set him as their sentinel; and he sees the sword coming upon the land, he blows the shofar and warns the people. If a listener heard the sound of the shofar but did not heed the warning and the sword came and took him; his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the shofar but did not heed the warning; his blood shall be upon himself. Had he heeded the warning, he would have saved his life' ... Now you, Ben Adam - I have made you a sentry for the family of Israel, and when you hear a matter from My mouth, warn them for Me. When I say of the wicked one, 'Wicked one, you shall surely die,' and you did ... warn the wicked one concerning his way that he should repent of it, and he did not repent of his way, he shall die for his sin.*”
5. The *shofar* reminds us to pray for the rebuilding of the destroyed Holy Temple, of which the prophet (*Jeremiah* 4:19-20) lamented: “*I shall not be silent, for the sound of the shofar have you heard, O my soul, the shout of war. Destruction upon destruction has been proclaimed...*”
6. The *shofar*, a ram's horn, reminds us of *Akeidas Yitzchak*, the Binding of Isaac (*Genesis* 22), when Abraham sacrificed a ram in lieu of his son. We similarly offer to sacrifice our lives in Sanctification of the Holy Name. Thus, may our remembrances ascend before Him for the good. [According to one opinion (*Pesika Rabbasi* 40:6), the *Akeidas Yitzchak* took place on *Yom Teruah*.
7. The sound of the *shofar* inspires fear and trembling in the hearts of all who hear it - as the prophet (*Amos* 3:6) asks: “*Can a shofar be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?*”

8. The shofar reminds us of the great and awesome Judgment Day of the future - which *Zephaniah* (1:14-16) describes: “Near is the great day of יְהוָה... a day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and oppressiveness; a day of utter desolation; a day of darkness and blackness; a day of clouds and thick fog, a day of shofar and shouting”
9. The *shofar* reminds us of the long anticipated day of the ingathering of the exiles and arouses an inner yearning in our hearts for that time. “And it will be on that day, He will blow on a great shofar, and they will come - those who were lost in the land of Assyria, and those cast out in the land of Egypt - and they will bow to יְהוָה on the holy mountain, in Jerusalem” (*Isaiah* 27:13).
10. The *shofar* reminds us of the resurrection of the dead and awakens our belief and yearning for that day. For then: “All inhabitants of the world and dwellers of the earth, when he raises a banner upon the mountains, you shall see, and when he blows the shofar, you shall hear (*sh'ma*)” (*ibid.* 18:3).

## 7. Confounds Satan

The Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) explains the reason for blowing the *shofar* before and during the *Amidah*:

*Rabbi Yitzchak asked ...Why do they blow tekiah and teruah when they are seated [before the Amidah when it is permissible to sit] and again blow tekiah and teruah when they are standing [during the Amidah which must be recited while standing]?—In order to confound Satan [the Accuser]. He further stated: Any year in which they do not blow the shofar at its onset they will cry at its conclusion. Why is this so?—Because they did not confound Satan.*

It is the repetition of the *shofar* blasts that confounds the Accuser. Similarly we find that the repeated shaking of the *lulav* on *Succot* is done 'to shake the power of the Accuser' (*Rashi to Succot* 3:26 citing *Ravyah*).

*Rashi* explains that when the accusing angel sees Israel's love and devotion to the performance of *mitzvot*, his words get caught in his throat.

*Tosafot* cites an alternative interpretation offered by R' Nassan of Rome in his *Aruch*. The prophet *Isaiah* (25:8) proclaimed that with the advent of the Messiah, *He will consume death forever*. Moreover: *On that day He will blow on a great shofar...* When Satan hears the first series of *shofar* blasts he hastens in confusion [to prepare his accusations]. But when he hears the second series, he says, 'This must certainly be the blast of the great *shofar*. The time has come to be consumed.' Thus he becomes confounded and [when he finally realizes his mistake] does not have sufficient time to properly arrange his accusations.

## (Some) Messianic Themes

### I. HaMelech: The Coronation of the King

In the Talmud we read: “*The recognition of G-d as King is vividly pictured in the Jewish view of Adam's understanding of his Divine Creator being King over all the Universe. It was late on the sixth day since G-d began the Creation of the world, when Adam opened his eyes and saw the beautiful world around him. And he knew at once that G-d created the world, and him too. Adam's first words were: "The L-rd is King forever and ever!" and the echo of his voice rang throughout the world. "Now the whole world will know that I am King," G-d said, and He was very pleased. This is the first Yom Teruah (Rosh HaShanah)! The first New Year. It was the birthday of Man, and the Coronation Day of the King of Kings!*”

A theme and term associated with *Yom Teruah* in Hebrew Thought is *HaMelech* (the King). It was mentioned earlier that the *shofar* blown on *Yom Teruah* is known as the last trump, which *Rav Sha'ul* (the apostle Paul) mentioned in First Thessalonians 4:16-17. One of the events that will take place is the coronation of the Messiah *Yeshua* as King. *Yeshua*, who had come to earth during His first coming to play the role of the suffering Messiah, that is, Messiah ben Joseph (*Yosef*), will be crowned as King over all the earth to reign as King Messiah (Messiah ben David) during the Messianic age, the Millenium, or in Hebrew eschatology, the *Athid Lavo* (Revelation 19:16; 20:4): *I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit... the*

*judgment was set, and the books were opened.* [This is *Yom Teruah*, *Yom HaDin*, the Day of Judgment. The books are the book of the righteous, the book of the wicked, and the book of remembrance]... *one like the Son of man* [this is understood to be the Messiah *Yeshua* (Matthew 24:30; 26:64)] *came with the clouds of heaven* [the clouds are the believers in the Messiah (Hebrews 12:1; Revelation 1:7)]... “*And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*” (Daniel 7:9-10,13-14).

## **II. The Enthronement Ceremony of a King**

There are four parts to the enthronement of a Jewish king.

1. The giving of the decree. Associated with this is a declaration. This can be seen in Psalm 2:6-7, as it is written, 'Yet have I set my king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree....' Next, a rod/scepter is given, which is an emblem of a king. Scriptures that refer to the scepter include Genesis 49:17; Numbers 24:17; Esther 4:11; 5:2; 8:4; Psalm 45:6; and Hebrews 1:8. Scriptures that refer to a rod are in Psalm 2:9; Isaiah 11: 1,4; and Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:16. The scepter is an emblem of a king or royal office and a rod refers to the king ruling and reigning righteously in all matters (Isaiah 11:1,4-5). *Yeshua* is the King Messiah (Isaiah 11:1,4-5; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Zech. 9:9; Luke 1:32-33; John 1:47-49).
2. The ceremony of the taking of the throne (Revelation 5). The king sits on the throne and is anointed as king. *Mashiach*, means ‘*the anointed one.*’ *Yeshua* came as a prophet during His first coming (Deuteronomy 18:15), was resurrected as the priest (John 20:9,17), and is coming back to earth again as King. Kings in Israel were anointed (2 Samuel 5:3-4; 1 Kings 1:39-40, 45-46; 2 Kings 9:1-6).
3. The acclamation. During the acclamation, all the people shout, ‘*Long live the king!*’ (1 Kings 1:28-31) Next, all the people clap (Psalm 47:1-2). Psalm 47 is a coronation psalm. Psalm 47:5 is the shout and trumpet of *Yom Teruah*. Verse 6 is the shouting and praising of the king. Verse 8 is the ceremony of the throne. In verse 9, the believers in Messiah *Yeshua* are gathered in His presence.
4. Each of the subjects coming to visit the king after he has taken the throne. In this, they will acknowledge their allegiance to him and receive their commissioning from him as to what their job will be in the kingdom (Isaiah 66:22-23; Zechariah 14:16-17; Matthew 2:2).

## **III. Yom HaZikaron: The Day of Remembrance**

*Yom Teruah* is known as *Yom HaZikaron*, the Day of Remembrance. Lev. 23:24 calls the day “a memorial”-*zikaron*. Remembrance is a major theme in Scripture. We can see by examining the following verses that *יהוה* remembers us and that we are to remember Him in all of our ways. There are two elements of remembrance:

1. **G-d remembers us** (Genesis 8:1; 9:1,15-16; 19:29; 30:22; Exodus 2:24-25; 3:1; 6:2,5; 32:1-3,7,11,13-14; Leviticus 26:14,31-33,38-45; Numbers 10: 1-2,9; Psalm 105:7-8, 42-23-1 112:6). In fact, G-d has a book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16-18; Exodus 32:32-33; Revelation 3:5; 20:11-15; 21:1,27).
2. **We must remember G-d** (Exodus 13:3; 20:8; Deuteronomy 7:17-19; 8:18; 16:3; Numbers 15:37-41). In Daniel 7:9-10 since the court was seated and the books were opened, it is—understood to be *Yom Teruah*. The books are the book of the righteous, the book of the wicked, and the book of remembrance. The third book that will be opened is the book of remembrance (*zikaron*). This is why the common greeting during *Yom Teruah* is, “*L’Shanah Tovah Tiaktevu,*” “May you be inscribed in the Book of Life.”