

WHY WE BLOW THE SHOFAR

by Torah.org

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In preparation for the High Holidays, we blow the Shofar each morning throughout the month of Elul, the final month of the Jewish year. Every morning, the Shofar reminds us of the holiness of Rosh HaShanah, marking the start of the New Year that lies ahead.



But why do Jews all around the world blow the shofar? What is so special that we must blow it and not another horn? Why on Rosh HaShanah?

There are hundreds of explanations — R' Saadia Gaon stated that the sound of the Shofar should inspire within us reverence towards God, while calling to mind the binding of Isaac and the Creation of the world. The Shofar is mentioned explicitly several times in the Torah — it was blown by warriors going into battle and by those marking the Jubilee year. *Am Yisrael*, the Nation of Israel, also heard the call of this horn when receiving the Ten Commandments at Har Sinai. The call of the Shofar is a symbolic battle cry of the Jewish People, and a reminder of the Covenant between us and God. The call of the Shofar represents all of these things — and more.

Maimonides suggests that the Shofar is a reminder for us to do *teshuvah*, or repentance. It serves as a wake-up call from our human ways, and encourages us to do *mitzvos*.

The sound of the Shofar awakens our desire to become closer to G-d, a yearning for meaning and fulfillment, and reminds us of the ram slaughtered by our father Abraham in a test from G-d to demonstrate his loyalty and commitment. And yet all of these are only earthly explanations for a Divine Commandment.

We stand at the entrance to a New Year, reminding ourselves of God's mastery of our lives and His laws which guide our actions to goodness. We sound the Shofar after long hours of prayer, and we are vulnerable — and, in the end, we cannot rationalize the blowing of a ram's horn.

It indeed reminds us of Biblical episodes, our humanity, and of a Covenant between the Jewish People and G-D — yet Jews blow the Shofar only because it is God's Commandment to do so. So when we blow the Shofar on Rosh HaShanah, we trust in God's plan for us and know that His instructions are our path to a fulfilling and meaningful life in the New Year.

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