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The Shofar

There are two types of trumpets used in the Bible:

1) The SHOFAR or ram's horn. It is mentioned over 80 times in the bible as either a ram's horn or trumpet. Traditionally it is a ram's horn, but any type of horn has been used, except a cow or steer horn (According to Jewish tradition we do not want to remind God of the golden calf incident!). The second most commonly used horn is the Yemenite shofar taken from an African antelope called the Kudu, taking the place of the silver trumpet (as described in #2). The first time the shofar is mentioned is in Exodus 19:16-19 when the Israelites had gathered at Mt. Sinai. The voice of the trumpet (shofar) sounded exceeding loud and waxed louder and louder. According to the Torah in Exodus 20:18 the sound was so penetrating that the people could actually see the sounds!

2) The Silver Trumpet. Numbers 10: 1-10 gives information about the silver trumpets. It is written: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee two trumpets of silver, of a whole piece shall thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the journey of the assembly of the camps and when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow but one trumpet, then the princes which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. When you blow the alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance forever throughout your generations. And if you go to war in your land against your enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets: and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginning of your months, ye shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God".

The shofar was blown at the temple to begin the Sabbath each week. There was within the temple a sign on the wall that said, "To the house of the blowing of the trumpet (shofar)". Each Sabbath 2 men with silver trumpets and a man with a shofar made three trumpet blasts twice during the day. On Rosh haShanah, this was different. The shofar is the primary trumpet. According to Leviticus 23:24 and Numbers 29, Rosh HaShanah is the day of the blowing of the trumpets. The original name is Yom (Day) Teruah (The staccato sound of the horn, which also means Shout). According to the Mishnah (Rosh HaShanah 16a, 3:3), the trumpet used for this purpose is the ram's horn, not trumpets made of metal as in Numbers 10. On Rosh HaShanah, a shofar delivers the first blast, a silver trumpet the second, and then the shofar the third.

Today, since the temple does not exist, the use of the silver trumpet is almost unknown. In its place, the Yemenite horn is used in many congregations as a call to worship. The only evidence we can present that God honors its use is that He visits us with His presence when the Yemenite shofars are blown.

Traditionally there are certain patterns of sounds that are used in blowing the shofar. These have been handed down through various sources in Judaism and vary according to local customs and interpretations. Do not be bound by these patterns as the only way to sound the shofar. Simply be aware of them and use them if that is what the Ruach haKodesh (Holy Spirit) leads you to sound.

The first is called the Tekyiah (T'kiyah). It can consist of one note (or blast) or it can be a low note near the fundamental tone of the horn that rises quickly about 3 notes higher. Finally, it can even be finished by a note that is a full octave higher. Contrary to what is expected, it does not take a great deal of air to blow a shofar. The secret is the vibration of the lips (a minimum of 16

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vibrations per second) that creates the vibration of air in the horn. The higher notes are obtained by tightening the lips.

The second sound is called the Shevarim (Sh'varim). It consists of three blasts that are from the fundamental low to the next note up. Great playing shofars are ones that will produce three notes with relative ease. Some shofars (for various reasons) may produce only two notes and poor ones only one note. Each horn will have its own "voice" and sound in many keys. The texture of the finish, size, length and the diameter of the mouthpiece opening will vary the sound of the horn.

The third sound is called the Teruah (T'ruah, teruwah). It is Strong's word #8643 8643 teruw` ah (ter-oo-aw'); from 7321 (ruah); clamor, i.e. acclamation of joy or a battle-cry; especially clangor of trumpets, as an alarm: KJV-- alarm, blow (-ing) (of, the) (trumpets), joy, jubile, loud noise, rejoicing, shout (-ing), (high, joyful) sound (-ing). The same word is used for the "Shout" that is made with the voice! It was the "shout" of the shofars combined with the "shout" of the people that brought down the walls of Jericho. Teruah consists of 9 staccato notes in succession. It may be preceded by a one-note tekyiah and may be finished by accenting the last note. Some will accent it and take it up a third. The Teruah is the "short blasts of alarm" as specified in Numbers 10:9. There is another blast called the Tekyiah Gadollah (Great Tekyiah). Some consider a fourth sound but it is simply a tekyiah held as long as breath lasts or is appropriate. Some shofar blowers can hold a note for over a minute!

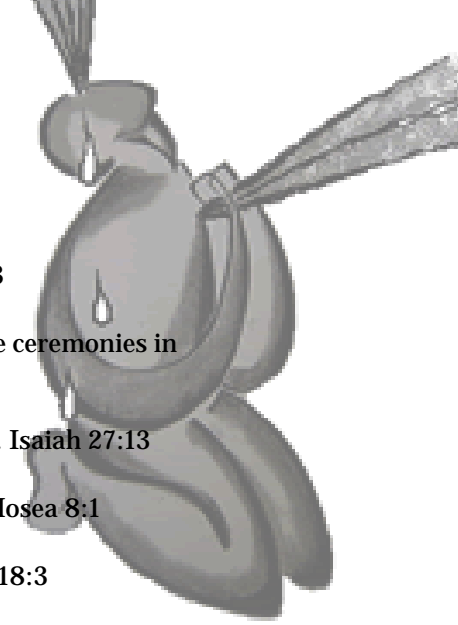
There is a difference of opinion in the Talmud as to whether the Teruah or the Shevarim was sounded in the Temple. As usual, the Rabbis compromised and both were considered valid. On Rosh haShanah the shofar is sounded 100 times with all the traditional forms. This is done to make sure that the shofar is blown often enough and with the proper sounds to satisfy God! How easy to be caught up in legalisms! Listen to the voice of the Spirit and use the horn as you would use your voice as an instrument of praise.

The Shofar Used In The Bible

The references to shofars, trumpets, rams' horns, coronets, etc. are extensive and prominent throughout the Bible and God's dealings with His people. The list below is by no means complete.

- 1) The ram's horn, the shofar, is a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac and God's provision of a ram as a substitute. Genesis 22:13
- 2) The Torah was given to Israel with the sound of the shofar from heaven. Exodus 19:19
- 3) The shofar was blown at the start of the year of Jubilee on Yom Kippur. Leviticus 25:9-10
- 4) The trumpet was blown to announce the beginning of the festivals. Numbers 10:10
- 5) Israel conquered in the battle of Jericho with the blast of the shofar. Joshua 6:20
- 6) Gideon and his army confused and scattered the enemy with the shofar. Joshua 7:15-22
- 7) The shofar was blown to signal the assembly of the Israelites during war Judges 3:27, 6:34, II Samuel 20:1, Jer. 4:19, 51:27, Neh. 4:20, Amos 3:6
- 8) Seven shofars were blown before the ark of God. 1Chr. 15:24, 2Sam. 6:15
- 9) They took an oath before the Lord.....with trumpets and rams' horns. 2Chr. 15:14
- 10) The shofar was used for the coronation of kings. I.e. King Solomon I Kings 1:34, 39

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- 11) The shofar is a reminder that God is sovereign. Psalm 47:5
- 12) The shofar was blown to celebrate the new moon each month. . Psalm 81:1-3
- 13) The shofar was used to accompany other musical instruments during temple ceremonies in Jerusalem and in praise and worship. Psalm 98:6, 150:3-6
- 14) The shofar will be blown at the time of the ingathering of the exiles to Israel. Isaiah 27:13
- 15) The blowing of the shofar is a signal for the call to repentance. Isaiah 58:1, Hosea 8:1
- 16) The shofars were blown as a warning. Ezekiel 33:3-6, Numbers 10:9, Isaiah 18:3
- 17) The blowing of the shofar ushers in the day of the Lord. Joel 2:1
- 18) The shofar is blown to call the sacred assembly. Numbers 10:3, Joel 2:15
- 19) Israel will be advised of the advent of the Messiah with the sound of the shofar. Zechariah 9:14, 16
- 20) The blowing of the shofar is sounded at the resurrection of the dead I Thess. 4:16
- 21) The shofar (trumpet) is the sound of God's voice. Revelation 1:10
- 22) John was taken up to Heaven in the Book of Revelation by the sound of the shofar. Revelation 4:1 .
- 23) Seven trumpets (shofars) are sounded when God judges the earth during the tribulation. Revelation 8-9

Judaism concerns itself with three shofar calls of God. They are called the first trump, the last trump and the great trump. The first trump was blown at Mount Sinai. The last trump is blown to signify the resurrection of the dead and may be blown on Rosh HaShanah. The great trump will signify the Second Coming of the Lord and is blown at Yom Kippur.

According to other scholars, there are only two trumps, the first at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:19). and the last (great) that is blown by God (Yeshua) Himself at His return on Yom Kippur. (Isaiah 27:13, Zech. 9:14, Matt. 24:29-31, 1st Thess. 4:16-17, 1st Cor. 15:52).