

The Shofar (Ram's Horn) of Yahuwah

Blow a shofar in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly. Joel 2:15

The sound of a shofar herald is recognized by all as the sound of announcement or alarm. The shofar is actually an instrument of war. From ancient times to the present day, armies have used a horn (trumpet) to send messages above the sound of battle. The sounding of reveille or taps is the beginning and end of a day. Taps is also sounded to memorialize those who have fallen and passed away. The sound of a charge is a special fanfare as well as the sound of retreat. An air raid siren or a civil defense alarm is really the sound of a horn. Trucks and cars use horns to warn or complain of the traffic. Ships use horns for warning and when sailing in the fog. Old trains used to whistle but now they only sound a horn at a crossing.

The sound of a shofar or horn is able to pierce its surroundings, to be heard above all other sounds. Something about its tone is recognized and distinguished from all others. It is no surprise then to discover that Yahuwah has used the sound of a shofar and a trumpet to communicate many aspects of our faith.

In fact, Yahuwah has instructed us to observe the Feast of Shofars, a day of sounding shofars and trumpets (Yom Teruah). On the first of Tishri in the late summer, Yahuwah calls us to join Him in a Kadosh Convocation (assembly) to hear the sound of the shofar. (Lev 23:24 and Num 29:1)

The Feast of Trumpets as it is called in the Western World is a time to sound the blasts of the ram's horn. The great blast of the trumpet is the tekiah hagadol. It is held in a long blow as long as the trumpeter can give. It does not drift off at the end but instead hits an even higher note at the conclusion. This blast is considered to be the trumpet of Yahuwah. This is the type of blast that was probably heard at Mount Sinai when Yahuwah gave the Ten Commandments and the Tuwrah. It is also expected that this type of blast will be at the end of the ages when Yahuwah returns with the resurrection of the saints.

There is a distinction with Yahuwah between trumpets and horns. Trumpets are actually made of metal to be instruments. A shofar is the actual horn of an animal hollowed out to form a horn for sounding. Moses was instructed to make two silver trumpets along with the furnishings for the tabernacle. These were the trumpets of the temple. The ram's horn dates back much earlier. The ram that was caught in the thicket by his horns was the actual sacrifice offered by Abraham and Isaac. Thus the sounding of a ram's horn could even be a reminder of that offering. The horn cannot be heard unless the ram has been slain and offered.

Today, the sound of a ram's horn is well known among Messianic brethren.

Trumpets in the Temple

Make yourself two trumpets of silver, of hammered work you shall make it them; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for having the camps set out. Num 10:2

In the wilderness beginning with the tabernacle, the sounding of the silver trumpets is the most ancient evidence available explaining how trumpets summoned and directed the people. While both trumpets would summon all the people to the tent of meeting, a single trumpet was used to summon the leaders of the tribes. Depending on which flank was involved, a different trumpet call would alarm the camp. The job of sounding these trumpets was given to the priests. Num 10:8

All annual festivals and beginning of months began with the trumpet call. Num 10:10

By the time the permanent temple location in Jerusalem was determined, Dawid assembled not only the materials but also the musicians and their instruments for worship in the temple. 1 Cho 13:8; 15:28

We can only imagine what the musical part of the worship was like in the temple. King Dawid was himself a musician and sought to enhance and promote music in the temple. By the time that King Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem, music was a central part of the proceedings with Yahuwah's participation. 2 Cho 5:13

The Psalms are worship tunes used in the temple. While we do not yet know the melodies played, we do have the inspiring words. One in particular addresses how the trumpet and the shofar were dynamically used in the temple service. Psa 98:6

There is another reference to trumpets in the temple but from a metaphoric point of view. The giving of money (terumah) was also common in the temple service but it was done in a unique way. They did not pass a plate or hat; there was no special ceremony to make a monetary offering; this type of giving was to be made privately and discretely. This was accomplished by a set of temple trumpets placed in the Court of Women to allow passersby to give their gifts in a discrete way. The containers that received these gifts were made of clay, shaped like the bell of a trumpet. The base was large and round at the bottom rising up to a narrow neck at the top. Sitting on the ground, they looked like large trumpets standing upright from the bell. They were thus called the temple trumpets. The narrow opening at the top would allow a giver to insert his gift, but the narrow neck prevented a hand from reaching further to retrieve anything. Their size also prevented them from being snatched and carried away. However, not everyone offered their termuah in a discrete way. Some made a spectacle of their gifts to draw attention to themselves. Ha'Mashyach and his disciples discussed this in Matthew 6:2.

In the Hebrew, Amanuwal was playing on the phonics of the two words terumah (offering) and teruah (trumpet). "When you give a termuah don't pick up the temple trumpets and try to sound a teruah". In the actual language, I'm sure they had a chuckle to go along with the lesson on haughtiness, but this indicates how powerful the subject of trumpets was in the temple service.

There is another metaphor of sorts associated with the "horns" in the temple service. Again, a horn is an instrument made from the horn of animal. It is sounded to proclaim announcements and warnings. Shofars were carried and sounded in from of a procession of the Ark of the Covenant. But Yahuwah also instructed that the altar was to have horns placed on the corners. Exo 27:2; 37:25

These horns were placed both on the fire altar and the golden altar. While the fire altar for sacrifices was outside the sanctuary, the golden altar of incense was inside. These horns did not serve any great function except to make the surface of the altar to be distinct from any point of view. There are minor references to a man clinging to the altar by the horns or binding something to the altar by the way of the horns, but none of these truly explain the command from Yahuwah to have horns on the altar. We are left with this interesting metaphor that the "horns" of the altar sound the sacrifice offering (termuah) before Yahuwah. These are the true trumpets a righteous man want "sounded" when he offers his gift to Yahuwah.

A horn was also an ideal container for anointing oil in the temple. 1 KI 1:39

American frontiersmen used to carry their gun powder in a horn to keep it dry. This is also where we get the expression blowing a bull horn. However, shofars and the horns used by Israel were never bull's horns. All shofars are made from the curved horns of an ibex ram. The reason dates back to the sin of the golden calf in the wilderness. Therefore Israel does not use the horns of a bull – it is too much of a reminder of their previous mistake. A bull horn was never to be sounded in the temple.

Trumpets as an Instrument of War

An when you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before Yahuwah Aluhym, and be saved from your enemies. Num 10:9

In the wilderness the silver trumpets where the alarm signal for men to assemble at the perimeter of the camp. It was also a request from the people for Yahuwah to go out to face their enemies. This latter statement speaks to the spiritual aspect of righteous courage.

Anytime that men must assemble to go to battle two very powerful elements face each other – fear and courage. The sounding of a trumpet in battle is supposed to make a soldier's courage stronger than his fear. It is also used against the enemy to cause fear to be greater than his courage to fight. In ancient times, and still to this day, the sound of a trumpet charge is "bone-chilling" if you are the target of the charge. We have a profound example of this in the famous story of Joshua's battle for Jericho. As you will recall, Israel walked around the walls of Jericho seven days blowing shofars until the seventh day when the walls came tumbling down. Jos 6:4, 20

There is no question that shofars and trumpets played a major part in the capture of Jericho. Some have said that the resonance of the shofars and trumpets and the vibrations of the walking may have weakened the wall structure for the collapse, but this has never been duplicated. And of course, believing such a view removes faith from the power of Yahuwah. Another battle between the Israelites and Midianites is much more understandable. It too, involved shofars.

Gideon was instructed by Yahuwah to assemble a very small force (by ancient standards) to fight the Midianites. He used only 300 men and armed each of them with a shofar and lamp. In ancient times, it

was common for a group of armed men to have one shofar and one lamp for every 1000 armed soldiers. Therefore, Gideon's 300 men in the night time appeared to be 300,000 troops. JDG 7:16

Gideon then gave instructions for the men to be divided into three groups surrounding the camp of the Midianites. JDG 7:18

The appropriate time came for Gideon's plan to be implemented. JDG 7:19-20

In the darkness the surprised Midianites thought they were surrounded by 300,000 troops. In their panicked attempts to escape, they actually attacked each other in the night, resulting in a great victory for Gideon. The sounding of the shofars was crucial. Not only did it awaken the enemy still in a stupor but it incited panic and fear in their hearts. The Midianites were destroyed by their own fear. This same fear is referred to by the prophet Amos. AMO 3:6

This is the same "fear" referenced for a future battle to come – the Day of Yahuwah. ZEP 1:16

Trumpets for Warning/Announcement

The sounding of a trumpet is not always to incite fear. More often, the sounding of the trumpet is to raise awareness of impending danger or the clear announcement of an event. This is the nature of the instructions given by the prophet Ezekiel when he explained the duties of the watchman to those who would hear his warning. EZE 33:4-6

In this instruction, the watchman is told that he must sound the trumpet alarm to warn the people. If he fails to sound the alarm, he will be held accountable. If he does sound the alarm, the accountability falls to those who did not heed the alarm.

Shofars/Trumpets are also used to make announcements or to draw attention to something happening or being said. This is the case for the Apostle John in his account in the book of Revelations. REV 1:10

Many believe that the revelator in the book of Revelations was Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach. But on closer examination, it is possible that the angel who showed John those things was not Mashyach himself, but an angel that had the voice like a trumpet, meaning that his voice commanded John's attention, just as a trumpet gets our attention. REV 4:1

This is not the only reference to trumpets in the book of Revelations. This is only an example of how the meaning of shofars/trumpets commanded John's attention and our resulting attention to what John wrote in the book.

Trumpets in the Book of Revelation

And I saw the seven angels who stand before Yahuwah; and seven trumpets were given to them. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. REV 8:2-6

The book of Revelations lists three major groupings of Yahuwah's judgments: seals with four horsemen, trumpet judgments, and bowls of plagues. In this article we are concerned with the trumpet judgments.

The seven trumpet judgments (within the 7th seal) are as follows: REV 16:1

1. A 3rd of trees and all grass is burned (REV 8:7)
2. A mountain is thrown into the sea with a 3rd of the sea destroyed (REV 8:8-9)
3. A star falls destroying a 3rd of fresh waters (REV 8:10-11)
4. A 3rd of the atmosphere is darkened from the sun, moon, and stars (8:12)
5. Locusts, symbolic of beast's military power (1st Woe) REV 9:1-12
6. 200 million horsemen; a 3rd of humanity killed (2nd Woe) REV 9:13-21
7. Seven Plagues (3rd Woe)
 - Sores on people who accepted the mark of the beast (REV 16:2)
 - Sea turns to blood, ALL sea creatures die (REV 16:3)
 - ALL rivers turn to blood (REV 16:4-7)
 - Sun scorches humanity with great heat (REV 16:8-9)
 - Beast's seat of government is afflicted (REV 16:10-11)
 - Euphrates dried up, world's armies gathered to Armageddon (REV 16:12-16)
 - Great earthquake and hail (REV 16:17-21)

If Yahuwah does not intervene, mankind would be destroyed in one hour. There is only one weapon that can produce such destruction – thermonuclear war. Note how the judgment is first pronounced? ... *from the four horns of the golden altar which is before Yahuwah... REV 9:13-18*

The horns of the altar are used to make a sound. They are not just ornamental in appearance.

The last three trumpet judgments are characterized as the "three woes" for added emphasis. They are heralded by an eagle in flight. REV 8:13

There are very few things in this world that compare to the sound of a trumpet for its ability to make an announcement. One is the territorial roar of a lion (heard for up to five miles away) and the screech of an eagle high in the sky (heard from great distances).

The Shofar/Trumpet of Yahuwah

At Mount Sinai, Moses was instructed to prepare the people for Yahuwah to come down on the mountain and speak to the people. Yahuwah used the sound of a ram's horn both to gather and to warn the people at the same time. It was imperative that the people not touch any part of the mountain, but to only assemble at the base. EXO 19:13

It was at Mount Sinai that when Yahuwah spoke many rocks split and fell from the mountain thus the warning against touching or being close to the mountain. The book of Hebrews references this event and gives emphasis to the sounding of the shofar along with Yahuwah's actual spoken words. HEB 12:19

This is the context for the prophet Joel to prepare us for Amanuwal's return and His coming down to us.
JOE 2:1

When we remember the story of the shofar and the voice of Amanuwal Yahuwah at Mount Sinai, we tend to under-appreciate what really happened. We tend to imagine an angel blowing the trumpet and then Yahuwah speaking the Ten Commandments. However, the Scriptures elsewhere tries to give us a better understanding. First, it probably wasn't an angel that sounded the trumpet; it could have been Amanuwal Yahuwah himself! The account of Exodus does not say that any angel blew the horn; instead, the shofar is sounded with lightening, thunder, and quaking. The Scriptures says that the shofar grew louder and louder. EXO 19:16-20

The sounds kept the people from advancing onto the mountain. Moses went up and came down to ensure that no one was on the mountain. Then Yahuwah spoke the Ten Commandments. The sound of the shofar and Yahuwah's voice completely unnerved the people. They were full of fear for their lives.

At the end of the ages, Yahuwah will return in similar fashion, with the sound of a trumpet or shofar and Yahuwah (the seven thunders). The prophet Zechariah is very specific about how Amanuwal Yahuwah will accomplish His return just as when He came down to Mount Sinai. ZEC 9:14; MAT 24:31; 1COR 15:52; 1THE 4:16

The Little Horn of Anti-Mashyach

Before we leave this subject completely, we need to address one last point about the subject of trumpets and horns. Our enemy, Satan, like to imitate and try to steal the glory of Yahuwah for himself. The same can be said for the symbolism and use of trumpets and horns. In fact, the prophet Daniel characterizes the work of the anti-mashyach as a little horn springing up to make trouble. DAN 7:8

The foremost prophecy of the anti-mashyach deals with how he comes to power. The little horn apparently rises in the midst of ten kings, defeating three while seven relinquish their power to him. DAN 7:24

The book of Revelation repeats this prophecy but adds more details. It details a riddle about ten horns (ten kings) with seven heads (seven historical kings) serving as the governmental base for the little horn (the beast) to rise to power. REV 17:12

Trumpets and horns are used as fanfares to announce kings. The anti-mashyach has his own fanfare of sorts to announce his arrival (the ten kings). I am certain that when the anti-mashyach comes to power, we will be affected by his trumpets – they may even instill a sense of fear and awe into many. That is when the words of the Psalmist will have their greatest effect on those of Yahuwah: *Yahuwah is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My Aluhym, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. PSA 18:2*

We sound trumpets and shofars now to prepare people for the trumpets and shofars that will be sounded in that day on which Yahuwah will sound his Trumpets.

This year I ask that you participate fully! Give attention to when the shofar is sounded, whether it is the physically piercing sound of the horn and trumpets or spiritually via the studies you will embark upon – they all have much to say to us.

Have a joyous FEAST of Shofar – A memorial of blowing of Shofars and Trumpets!