

The Spiritual Mystery of the Shofar—And Why So Many Christians Misuse It

In a few days, we will be celebrating the Feast of Trumpets, and Jews—along with a growing number of Christians—will gathered together to observe this biblical holy day. There will be special services and time devoted to repentance and introspection, but the focal point of the day will be when the shofar is sounded. This simple trumpet made from an animal's horn produces a sound that connects eternity to eternity. The traditional blasting of the shofar 100 times is both exciting and empowering to the hearer. This powerful sound, which is of such great importance that it was commanded by God to be heard by the children of Israel, has an even greater importance. It is one that is often missed by those who have consistently gathered year after year to hear the sound so as to fulfill the commandment.

For the majority of those who will gather in synagogues to hear the shofar, the purpose of the sound is to mark the opening of the doors of repentance for the period of time between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. These 10 days are known as the "Days of Awe." But there is an even greater meaning given for the shofar sounding, one that reminds us that repentance isn't the end of the story for those who love God. While the shofar does remind us of the open door for repentance, its purpose is not only to lead us to our knees in repentance.

This greater purpose for the sounding of the shofar has been lost to some extent because the use of the shofar in Judaism has throughout the years become limited to the sounding on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur (and in some places on Rosh Chodesh). However, the shofar was used to proclaim the

coronation of a King, as well as its use in warfare to direct the army. It is these two uses that have been lost to most people, and as such, Rosh Hashanah has become a time only for sorrow and repentance, when its purpose was not singular in ancient times.

On Rosh HaShanah, a prayer called Avinu Malkeinu (Our Father Our King) is recited. Yet His Kingship is relegated only to the His ability to forgive His people. He is much more than a forgiver; He is a redeemer and deliverer. He is strong in mighty and strong in battle. This shofar blast is not simply to call us to repentance. It is to remind us of why we are called to repentance. It is a reminder of what comes after repentance: victory.

To better understand the shofar blast, think back to those wonderful old westerns, the movies in which the hero has been surrounded by the enemy and all looks hopeless. Then, softly in the distance, you hear the sound of a bugle. As moments pass, the bugle gets louder and with it you hear the sound of many horses riding at full gallop. With each blast of the horn, the defeat is driven out of the heart of those surrounded and it is replaced with hope. Defeat is swallowed up by victory. This, in essence, is what the sound of the shofar should do for those hearing it. Each year we gather, realizing that by depending on our own power and abilities, we have been surrounded by the enemy of our soul. But then, the shofar sounds and we realize the King is coming with His army to bring total victory against our enemy. Every year when the shofar blasts on Rosh HaShanah, our hearts are reminded that with every year that passes, the King riding upon His white horse is getting closer and closer and one day soon we will hear the Great Shofar sound and the enemy will be vanquished. Rosh HaShanah is not intended to remind us of our defeats; it is intended to keep us watching for His deliverance as we are set free. {eoa}

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