

# The Meaning of the Shofar Sounds

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## **Shofar sounds - What do Rosh Hashanna Shofar sounds mean?**

The notes a skillful shofar blower can produce from this magnificent musical horn are far from being random. Each and every **shofar sound** has a role in preparing the mind and soul of the listeners to the spiritual process they are about to go through.

### **There are essentially four traditional shofar sounds:**

**Tekiah** – One long blast

**Shevraim** – Three medium length blasts

**Teruah** – Nine short staccato sounds

**Tekiah Gedolah** – One extra long blast

There is not a single meaning to each of the shofar sounds. Over time, many meanings have been attributed to each type of shofar sound; however, there is essentially a consistent theme running through the various interpretations given for each particular shofar sound.

### **First Shofar sound - The Tekiah**

The laws of Jewish halacha regarding the sounding of the shofar demand that all of the shofar notes sounded shall have a **Tekiah** to precede and succeed them. The Tekiah, with its long straight sound, is the bookends of all life. It comes first and it goes last.

**Tekiah** indicates stability in life. It also indicates discipline and consistency. Stability, peace, discipline and consistency are values which help us raise children who grow up to be confident and fully aware of their self-worth.

Tekiah is also considered to be the sound of the coronation of the King. Every year, during Rosh HaShannah, The new Jewish Year, G-d is crowned King of the universe. Crowning Him King acknowledges that His commandments are for the good of mankind and that His concern is that people live in peace and harmony. Tekiah accepts His reign in our lives.

However, Tekiah can be a symbol of complacency with the status quo, a complacency which will soon be stirred to action through courage which the Tekiah commands.

We have lived a stable life, going about our mundane routine, day in and day out throughout the year. This routine made us indifferent to certain mistunes or defects present on our path. It made us feel safe and sound in that which is familiar.

Tekiah is the **sound** which is to **awaken us** from a **spiritual slumber** and prepare us to what is coming next:

## **Second Shofar sound - The Shevarim**

The Shevarim represents the times of trouble, the wails that emanate from the human heart when failure, tragedy and seemingly insurmountable problems befall us.

No one can pass through this life without Shevarim. It is the call to look beyond ourselves, realize and empathize with the pain existing in this world. It is an awakening towards self evaluation, introspection and the heartbroken feeling that follows, when we understand that we have once again failed living to our full potential. It is the cry to reconnect, grow and achieve.

**Shevarim sound** is also the sound of mourning for the Holy Temple which once stood in Jerusalem. The Jewish people have shed an ocean of tears over history due to the terrible ordeals they had to go through, but those tears have become the strong foundation of a national existence.

Shever means fracture, something that is cracked and broken. It is in the darkness of the Shevarim, that we can find the glimpse of hope and see the light that diffuses in. We come to full understanding of that which calls for a change.

Each of us can build upon those very sounds of wailing to construct a better future for all of us.

## **Third Shofar sound - The Teruah**

The Teruah is a call for accomplishment. It signals that passivity is unacceptable if our potential is to be realized. We need to be honest about the objective of our lives: Who we are, where we've been and the direction towards we are headed. Teruah resembles a giant alarm clock, reminding us to complete the mission. It brings clarity, alertness and focus.

**The short staccato sounds** remind us that progress is often measured in small steps, one foot after the other. Redemption and self-improvement are processes rather than miraculous and sudden epiphanies. We sound the shevarim and teruah consecutively during shofar service to indicate that after troubles and even tragedy, resilience and positive action is required. Thus the sounds of the shofar come to point our way towards a disciplined and active year that will be filled only with wails of joy and happiness.

## **Fourth Shofar Sound – Tekiah Gedolah**

Finally, we gather all our resolutions and go back to the start. We have to right all wrongs. This is the purpose of the Tekiah Gedolah. Its long stable continuous sound helps us go back to square one with a feeling of awe. We witness the birth of a new and better self surrounded by the unwavering love of G-d which is always present but hardly ever noticed. The Long Tekiah opens our ears to hear it and feel it. It helps us regain stability and discipline so that we would be able to realize our new commitment to G-d and to our new born self.