

ליקוטי ופסקין הלכות "חוקי חיום"

ותלמידם
שתקפ' האספס"ה
לעשות רצונך
בלבב שלם



שע"י "חדר הוראה" שכונת מנוחת יצחק פעה"ק ירושלים טובב"א - בראשות הרב חיים אהרון בליעוד שליט"א

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Please do not read
during Davening
or Krias Hatorah

Elul, Kashrus of a Shofar

Shoftim 5780

56

The Month of Elul

"Kesivoh Vachasimoh Tovah"

- When writing a letter to a friend in Elul, one should indicate at the beginning or end his wishes for a good year (באר היטב תקפ"א סק"י, מטה אפרים ס"ט).

Blowing Shofar

- There is a minhag to blow the shofar every morning beginning on the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul [1st of Elul] until – but not including – Erev Rosh Hashonoh (ג"ג). ר"מ א"ת תקפ"א ומ"ב סק"ג.
- Which sounds?** Some blow tekioh-shvorim-tru'oh-tekioh; tekioh-shvorim-tekioh; tekioh-tru'oh-tekioh, based on the Bach (ב"ס), who writes that all public tekios must be that way lest people think that tek-sh-tr-tek is the main one (ר"מ פראנקפורט, צאנז, קרלין, חב"ד, טשענרבאייל, ס"ז). However, most places only blow tek-sh-tr-tek. Some blow tek-sh-tr-tek; tek-sh-tek; tek-tr-tek on Rosh Chodesh Elul since the minhag was mainly instituted for Rosh Chodesh, and just tek-sh-tr-tek for the rest of the month (תשובות והנוגות ח"ג ס"ג קל"ג).
- Make-up.** If the minyan did not blow shofar after Shacharis, some say they should blow after Minchah (ש"ת אגרות משה או"ח ח"ד ס"י כ"א) since the purpose of the minhag is to inspire teshuvah. Others say that there is no reason to make-up the missed shofar blasts (דעת הגריש"א ומשנה הלכות).
- A yochid.** One who is davening alone need not blow shofar (הגריש"א, צ"א ח"ב ס"י מ"ח), therefore those who are currently davening at home due to the current situation [5780] don't need to hear the Elul shofar blasts.
- Interrupting.** If the only one in the minyan who knows how to blow shofar is in between the paragraphs of Shema or its brochos, he may blow the shofar. This is no worse than greeting an honorable figure in between paragraphs, which is muttar. He may certainly blow shofar while he is in the middle of Pesukei Dezimroh (ש"ת מהרים ברиск ח"ג ס"כ).
- Mid-Shemoneh Esrei.** If one is saying Shemoneh Esrei and hears the shofar, some say he may stop and listen (הגר"ח קנייבסקי ובשות' מתנית). Others say he does not need to stop and listen (בעל משנה הלכות).
- Standing?** We do not find that one needs to stand during these tekios (ש"ת שבת הקהתי שם).
- If there is a bris in shul, the bris should be performed before the shofar blowing (מקור חיים ז"י תקפ"ז).
- Over a loudspeaker.** Since we are not meticulous in very fine detail with this minhag, one may be yotzei by hearing the shofar over a loudspeaker or telephone, if there is no other choice. He is not yotzei with a recording however, since no one is actually blowing the shofar at that moment. Thus, one is not yotzei when hearing cars playing very loud recordings of a shofar along with a message from a tzedokoh organization, as are common in Yerusholayim.
- Koton.** If there is no gadol present, a koton may blow the shofar. A gadol is preferable, though, for kovod hatzibbur.
- Q.** If a certain person always blows shofar in a particular minyan, is precedence given to him based on the rules of chazokoh as we find by the tekios of Rosh Hashonoh (מ"ב סק"א), or does whoever come first have the right to blow, since it is only a minhag? A. It would seem that the rules of chazokoh apply here.

Tehillim

- There is another minhag to say ten kapitlach Tehillim followed by Kadish in a minyan after davening on the weekdays from Rosh Chodesh Elul and on.

"Ledovid Hashem Ori"

- It is customary to say "ledovid Hashem ori..." every day after davening, morning and evening (מ"ב סק"ב). Some say it after Minchah; some say it after Ma'ariv. Each person should follow his minhag.
- Some say that one who said "ledovid" after Minchah, and then davens Ma'ariv in a minyan which says it after Ma'ariv should say it again with the minyan (הילכת שלמה ר'ה ארחות הלכה העשרה); others say he does not need to say it again (הירוש"א ובעל משנה הלכות).

Checking Mezuzos

- Some scrupulous people check their tefillin and mezuzos every year in Elul (מטה אפרים ס"ק). However, the Shulchan Oruch (י"ד ס"י רצ"א ס"א) says that one only needs to check his mezuzos twice in seven years, i.e., every three and a half years. Therefore, if it is anyways around the time to check them, one should check them in Elul.
- The bedikoh.** The purpose of checking every three and a half years is not to make sure the words are spelled according to the mesoroh; for that one only needs to check them once, before they are affixed. Every three and a half years, they should be checked to see if any letters got erased or blurred, or if the kaf got worn out due to moisture or exposure to sunlight (ווט' מנוחות מג' ע"א).
- Therefore, they do not need to be checked by an expert in the mesoroh of the spelling; anyone can inspect them to see if the kaf is moist or if any letter is blurred or broken and ask a shailoh if necessary (הה"ס סי' רפ"ג סק"ג), however since it is common for small cracks to occur in the ink and most people are laymen when it comes to Halochos of sta'm, it is worthwhile to give it to a professional sofer to check.
- Brochoh.** One who takes down a mezuzoh to check it and returns it right away does not need to make a brochoh upon returning it (בוחות הדר פ"א ז').
- If, however, there was a long time in between, e.g., if he brought them to a Rov with a shailoh, he must make a brochoh when he puts them back up. If he puts them back up another day, he may certainly make a brochoh (עשרה' ש); if it is the same day, it is a machlokes haposkim, and therefore a sofeik, so he should not make a brochoh.
- If he puts up a new mezuzoh which was not there before, or if the mezozoh was posul and then fixed, he certainly makes a brochoh (חוותה הדר סט).
- If a mezuzoh falls or becomes loose, e.g., if the bottom nail fell out and it is hanging by the top nail, he should make a brochoh when he repositions it (ש).
- Secure.** Mezuzos must be secured in such a way that they cannot fall or be removed easily. Therefore, one should not glue or tape them loosely in a way that they can be pulled out (דעת קדושים).
- Therefore, even if they are within three and a half years from their last inspection and the letters do not need to be checked, one can still fulfill the minhag to check them in Elul by verifying that they are securely affixed.
- One may not remove a mezuzoh from a place that is chayov de'oraiso and put it on a place that is only chayov derabonon or potur altogether, thereby lowering its kedushoh. Therefore, it is advisable to mark the place of each mezuzoh to ensure that each one gets returned to its original spot (מצוות מלכים ס"ק קפ"ז).

26. Some people of means have vacation houses e.g. in Bournemouth, England, or in the United States, bungalows, and have never checked the mezuzos. It is advisable to check them, especially if they are in sunny or rainy places.

Checking Tefillin

27. We quoted the Mateh Efrayim (see 16) who writes that scrupulous people check their tefillin in Elul. On the other hand, the Shulchan Oruch (*א"ח ס"ל ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*) writes that tefillin which have a chezkas kashrus never need to be checked.

28. If one only puts them on from time to time, he must check them twice every seven years (*ש"ע שמ"ב*). Some say that since we only wear tefillin during davening, that may be considered "from time to time" which would necessitate checking them twice every seven years (*א"א בוטשאטש ושולחן הטהור ס"ב*).

29. Our tefillin are made from the thick hide of large animals, have been well-processed and exceptionally crafted with strong, tight stitches, and are properly squared off. Accordingly, there are those who reason that unless one knows that there may be a problem, e.g., if his tefillin fell into water or were exposed to high temperatures, he may rely on the Shulchan Oruch. In fact, repeatedly opening and closing tefillin may actually ruin them (*הגרשא, הליכות שלמה פ"ד אות ל"ז*).

30. If one still wants to fulfill the minhag to check his tefillin in Elul, he may check the straps and battim to make sure they are properly black and square.

Kashrus of a Shofar

Shofar for Rosh Hashonoh

31. The mitzvah of shofar on Rosh Hashonoh is with a ram's horn (*ש"ע ס"א תקפ"ז ס"א*) to commemorate akeidas Yitzchok (*מ"ב שמ"ב*). A male sheep is considered a ram [ayil] from the age of thirteen months and one day (*כ"ג חמ"ם ס"ב*).

32. Chazal say that a curved shofar is preferable to a straight one to signify that we should "bend our hearts" to Hashem during davening (*ש"ע ומו"ב שמ"ב*). Even a slight curve is enough for it to be considered curved (*חו"ט שני נ"ט ר"ה עמי נ"ט*).

Borrowing Without the Owner's Knowledge

33. One may use another's shofar in its place to be yotzei the mitzvah without his knowledge, since people want mitzvos to be done with their property (*מ"ב ס"ק ב' ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*). He may even borrow it to be motzi women or children (*ש"ת אג"מ או"ח ח"ב ס"י ק"ר נ"ט*).

34. If the shofar broke while he was using it, he is potur from paying since he has the status of a *sho'eil* who is potur if the item breaks during normal usage (*ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב ס"ק ב' ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*).

35. One may not borrow a shofar without permission to merely practice, since that is not a mitzvah (*ח"א כלל ק"מ ס"ח ס"ב*). It would seem that one may borrow a shofar without permission to fulfill the minhag to blow shofar in Elul, since that is somewhat of a mitzvah.

A Hole in the Shofar

36. If the shofar got a hole which did not get sealed, even if it sounds different, it is kosher (*ש"ע שמ"ב ס"ב*), since all sounds from a shofar are kosher. Nevertheless, if another shofar is available, one should not use the one with a hole, since according to some, one should not blow from a shofar with a hole (*רמ"א שמ"ב*).

37. If the shofar has a hole, but its sound is as clear as it was before, all agree that it is kosher (*מ"ב ס"ק ב' ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*). Those who test a shofar with water and will not use it if it has even the slightest hole are just doing a hiddur (*ש"ת שבת חולין ח"ח קל"ג ס"ק ב' ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*).

38. When buying a shofar, one should make sure there are no holes or cracks. He should specifically check under stickers with the brand name, price, or hechsher, because sometimes "coincidentally" they "happen to" cover up the exact spot of the hole...

A Crack in the Shofar

39. If the shofar got cracked lengthwise, it is posul. Some say even a tiny crack renders it possul; others say only if the crack extends across most of the length of the shofar (*ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב ס"ב*). If there is no other choice, one may rely on the second opinion (*מ"ב מ"ג*). It is considered a crack if it goes all the way through the thickness of the shofar wall (*מ"ב ל"ח ס"ב*); a mere nick or scratch does not make it possul (*מ"ב ל"ז*), even if some of the shofar came off (*א"ר ס"ק ב' ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב ס"ב*).

40. A crack which is widthwise, i.e., around the circumference, does not make the shofar possul if it comprises the minority of the width. If it comprises most of the width, the shofar is posul unless there is a tefach between the crack and the mouth of the shofar. Some say it is kosher even if the tefach is on the other side of the crack (*ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב ס"ב*). If there is no other choice, one may rely on this (*מ"ב ס"ק ב' ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב ס"ב*).

41. The Shulchan Oruch mentions several ways to fix a shofar, e.g., gluing it, binding it with twine, or melting it. Nowadays that there are many shofaros available, these are not so practical.

Size of the Shofar

42. The minimum size of a shofar is four thumb's-breadths (*ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*), i.e., a tefach long (*ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*). That is the equivalent of 8 cm according to Rav Chaim Naeh, or 9.6 cm according to the Chazon Ish.

43. Ideally, one should make sure that the shofar is three tefochim long to satisfy several Rishonim's opinion that when grasped, a tefach of the shofar must be visible on either side of the hand (*עמק ברכה*).

Foreign Substances on the Shofar

44. If something is stuck onto the outside of the shofar, and it affects the sound, the shofar is posul (*ר"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*). It is very difficult to know with certainty if something changes the sound. Therefore, it is proper to avoid sticking anything external onto the shofar. Thus, it is inadvisable to use the shofaros found in stores that are decorated with gold, silver, or the like.

45. There are shofaros which are gold- or silver-plated with the plating extending inside of the shofar from one of the ends. These are completely posul according to everyone.

46. **Varnish.** The Shulchan Oruch writes (*ר"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*) that those who paint the shofar with different colors are acting improperly. Sometimes, the manufacturers add varnish to make the shofar shine. It is advisable to avoid these shofaros because it is unknown whether or not the varnish changes their sound (*ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*). Nevertheless, bedi'eved one is yotzei with them even if he did not actually test to make sure the sound was not changed (*ש"ת שבת חולין ח"ח ס"י ק"ג אוח ז"ט*).

47. Therefore, it is worthwhile to remove any stickers from the shofar before using it for the mitzvah, since they may change its sound.

48. When one rubs or buffs a shofar, it naturally shines. As long as no substance was added, it is kosher lechatchilah, since there is no requisite size for the thickness of a shofar's walls (*ע"פ המ"ב שם ס"ק ב' ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*). Thus, if a shofar is shiny, it may be a natural sheen and not varnish.

Foreign Objects Inside a Shofar

49. Occasionally small pieces of dirt are found inside a shofar. If they are very small, and especially if they are not stuck to the walls, they do not invalidate the tekios. So paskened Moron the Ga'avad of Yerusholayim shlit'a for me one year by tekias shofar.

50. If one cleaned his shofar before Rosh Hashonoh by inserting a tissue, pipe cleaner, or the like, he must ensure that everything came out. One year in a certain well-known yeshivoh, a piece of a pipe cleaner came out of the end of the shofar in the middle of the tekios. Since it was a sizable piece, they blew the tekios again.

Changing the Shape of the Shofar

51. The shofar on the ram's head is bent and rounded, especially near the mouth end of the shofar. Unlike the wide end, the narrow end is naturally closed up. To create a shofar, it must be straightened to a certain extent through heat in order to drill a hole through it. The old shofaros were fully straightened out and thinned, without any dips or grooves, besides for one upward curve.

52. Today, there are many Moroccan shofaros which are partially processed. I.e., only the bare minimum of the mouth-end of the shofar necessary to drill a hole is straightened out. The rest remains in its natural thickness and with all its grooves. Halachically, this has an advantage in that it satisfies Rav Sa'adiah Gaon's opinion (*סiddur ז"ה והוג השליש'*) that one may not change a shofar's shape. Some are chosheish for this (*ש"ת מנח"י ח"ח ס"י ב"ג*). That being said, some of the shofar must be straightened to drill a hole, both then and now. Rav Sa'adiah Gaon must have been referring to changing the shape more than necessary.

Widening the Mouth of the Shofar

53. The Shulchan Oruch writes that if one widened the narrow end and narrowed the wide end of a shofar, it is posul (*ר"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*). Some say that even if he only widened the narrow end and blew out of it, it is posul (*הווים ררוועה ר"ה כ"ז ע"ב ד"ה הפכו, מנוח"י בע"ד בדעת רב ס"ב*). Yet the poskim imply, and it is clear from the Mishnah Berurah, that it is only posul if he made both changes mentioned by the Shulchan Oruch; if he only widened the mouth, it is still kosher.

54. There are manufacturers [including some with a Badatz hechsher] that widen the mouth slightly to make it circular instead of flat, thus making it easier to blow. Some say this would be posul according to the 'Hayom Teru'oh' (*ש"ת מנח"י ט"ו ש"ע שמ"ב*). However, upon analysis of his words, it becomes clear that the 'Hayom Teru'oh' was referring to a case where one widened the narrow end until it was also wide. If the narrow end was slightly widened, but is still narrow and the shofar still looks like a shofar, it would still be kosher. Moron the Ga'avad of Yerusholayim shlit'a paskened for me that one need not worry about this.

Engraving Different Shapes

55. One may carve shapes onto the shofar since they are from the material of the shofar itself (*ר"ו ש"ע שמ"ב ס"ב*). In fact, on some old shofaros, the wide end was engraved to look like a crown. Nevertheless, the Kaf Hachayim (*ג"כ ק"ב ס"ב*) writes that the minhag is not to carve any shapes onto the shofar.