

UNCERTAIN SOUNDS

1 Cor. 14:8

8) For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

1 Cor. 14:10-11

10) There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them *is* without signification.

11) Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh *shall be* a barbarian unto me.

THE LAW OF THE SHOFAR

The Law Of The Shofar is a highly esteemed precept amongst the most dedicated Jews even today. Highlighted within this Jewish sacred teaching which offers a broad canvass of articulate requisites, is the command of "hearing the shofar." The mitzvah or command to hear is the most vital aspect of the law itself and receives the most detailed of instructions. While the blowing of the shofar is an obvious rudimentary function regarding its overall purpose and determines its most esteemed value, it is intimately reliant upon the hearer of the shofar. Those distinguishing sounds heard whether it's a call to assemble for battle or worship, will ultimately be incumbent upon the hearer. He that hath an ear let him hear.

The Jewish Holy Day of Rosh Hashanah, or The Feast of Trumpets, is also known and regarded as "The Day of Blowing." History teaches us that throughout many centuries there were extended seasons where the Jewish people risked their very own lives by keeping the command to blow the shofar. During certain times of captivity, specific civil laws prohibited the blowing aspect of worship for the Jews, thus forcing the blowing during these critical seasons to be done in secret. For the Jews, this would always prove to be an incredibly difficult challenge to overcome, seeing that blowing alone while emphatically commanded was intrinsically dependent upon the people hearing and properly responding for there to be a legitimate fulfilling of the command. The built-in understanding of the command to blow was obviously the need to respond. If there was no response by the people, the command or mitzvah was violated, even though the proper protocol of blowing was carefully performed.

Consequently, two terms became familiar to the Jews; the “blowing” of the shofar and the “sounding” of the shofar. Only when the people heard and responded to the blowing was the protocol considered the “sounding” of the shofar. By hearing the distinctiveness of the different blasts and being able with discernment and comprehension to willingly and properly respond to those exclusive sounds, the mitzvah was then considered correctly observed. Henceforth, the dual responsibility of both hearing and responding was dutifully required to fulfill the purpose and scriptural mandate of the command to blow the shofar. Blowing alone of the shofar did not properly fulfill the command, thus rendering it incomplete. Hearing but not responding accordingly also made the mitzvah invalid. Having ears, they hear not.

The greatest concerns pointed out within The Law Of The Shofar were the authenticity of “what” was being sounded, along with “when,” “where,” and “how.” All four of these prerequisites were paramount to the people’s response. On the battlefield, the blowing of the shofar along with the subsequent response meant life or death. More importantly, in the call to worship, it meant pleasing God or incurring His wrath.

WHAT (Our Message)

What was being sounded would produce discipline and order, or chaos and confusion, and also blessings or judgment. The scriptural command was to blow that exact certain sound God was mandating the people to hear and respond to at that special moment in time. Blow it loud and make it clear so that all the people would be afforded equal opportunity to respond rightfully. A great and heavy responsibility rested with much weight upon the shoulders of the one blowing the shofar. The New Covenant reflections are clear concerning the “what” of our vocation—Preach the “WORD.” Be instant in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. Long-suffering preaching reveals our love for souls. Doctrinal preaching reflects our love for God and truth. Our response indicates the fruit or evidence that we have received the love of truth, or else we have rejected His divine overtures of the manifold grace of God.

WHEN (Our Spiritual Intimacy)

God uniquely commanded for special times and seasons to be interwoven into the fabric of the people’s worship unto Him. This profound aspect of God’s nature was also reflected in times of war while on the battlefield. At sundry times and different places, God required the shofar to be blasted.

The exclusive seasons of worship were also ordered of the Lord, and the people were commanded to mark the days upon their calendar as to faithfully obey these ordained seasons of holy convocation. These festivals or feasts of worship were regarded as sacred unto the Lord and reflected a unique intimacy with God. The timeliness of the blowing of the shofar alerted and reminded the people of the special season of worship they were entering into, along with the consecration needed as to be found pleasing unto the Lord. The timeliness or “when” to blow cultivated structure, discipline, and order in the camp. This eliminated any “free-spirit” or “rogue worshippers” from doing their own thing whenever they felt it was personally convenient for them. No man comes to God except His Spirit draws them.

We come to God or respond to His calling on His time schedule and on His terms, not ours. God desires a special and intimate relationship with men who were shut-in with God in a secret place. For as many as are led by the Spirit, they shall be called the sons of God. Jehovah uniquely gathered or assembled His people unto Himself to sanctify or separate them from all other peoples and nations around them. The shofar initiated, led, and directed them into this season of sanctification towards this special arena of worship through the sounding of the shofar.

This separation from the common daily cares of life, along with their gathering unto Jehovah Himself, shows a high level of biblical imagery reflective of spiritual intimacy. In Lev. 23, we witness Israel’s peculiarity and uniqueness as a nation through the expression of these festivals of Holy Convocation. God desires spiritual intimacy with His people and no other expression of intimacy was clearer for Israel than the feast days of Jehovah. The call to assemble came through the lips of men as they sounded the shofar in the ears of the people.

WHERE (Our Direction)

Jewish scholars and teachers of antiquity teach that the mitzvah of the shofar is prohibited from being blown inside a cave to avoid any sounds of echos. Echos send forth confusing sounds. The blurring of sounds distorts the authenticity of the original sounds. The people must hear the exclusiveness of that one and only distinct sound rather than the convoluted mirage of echoing sounds that ultimately cultivate a different sound altogether. This is an illegitimate sound that unfortunately initiates an improper response. Any echo-chamber type environment that creates diverse sounds is the number one concern for all Jews regarding the Law Of The Shofar. Much warning is prescribed to the blower of the shofar. They teach that echos only affect the external man by bouncing off the ears of men.

But if the shofar is allowed to be blown clearly and distinctly by standing on high and open places, then that original pristine sound penetrates the inner man so deeply as to generate the response required by God. That sound then affects more than the ears, but it penetrates the inner sanctums of the heart. The place, or the venue, is vitally important, therefore to the one blowing. Where he stands is tantamount to both God and the people. We see this also reflected in the New Covenant teaching of discipleship. Where we stand is as important as what we stand on. The enemy seeks to destroy our stand. So stand firm in the faith and earnestly contend for it.

We are a city set on a hill, not hidden in a cave. It is on that very hill that we stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. When we have done all there is to do, all that we can do, to stand...then stand, therefore. Take a stand. The first spiritual armor represented in Ephesians 6 but often overlooked is our command to take a stand—a stand for truth. We initially are to be protected in spiritual warfare by determining and establishing our stand. Once we are firmly established in our stand, we are then instructed to put on the whole armor of God. Our posture, convictions, and attitude towards truth reflect where we stand in battle. What good is a fully armed soldier of God if he is not willing to first and foremost take a stand for truth no matter what? If our stand is compromised, no matter how fully armed we may appear, retreat and defeat will be certain.

HOW (Our Attitude)

The Jews teach to blow the shofar with your head up. The downward posture of the one blowing reduces the shofar's sound and hinders the purpose and design of the shofar. An enclosed downward position muffles the sound going forth. The bent shofar is preferred as opposed to the perfectly straight shofar. The bent shofar, the preferred ram's horn is the most common and natural design celebrated. Therefore, by design, it is intended to be held up high above the head to best utilize the superior qualities of the bent horn. The physical posture before the eyes of the enemy is greatly considered, so a sign of strength is the high upholding of the shofar. It reflects a spiritual symbolism of strength in both the instrument and blower towards their roles in victorious redemption. This victorious symbol in battle is triumphantly displayed by the blower as he looks to the hills with an upward look. The significance of how the one blowing presents himself with the shofar is critically laid out by Jewish sages in *The Law Of The Shofar*. Much New Testament symbolism exists to reveal the posture of the one spiritually sounding the shofar today. The requisites of ministerial qualifications found in Paul's writings to both Timothy and Titus strengthens the offices of ministry.

The qualifications for ministerial offices are elevated above all men. The offices consequently are bigger and higher than any man. The epistle's teachings on how we, the people of God, should present ourselves unto both God and man is by definition a higher way of living. The "how" of our salvation describes our attitude towards truth and righteousness. Jesus in the Temple noticed "how" the people along with the widow gave. Paul in 1Cor. 3 teaches us the importance of "how" we as master builders are to build. What we are building, and building upon, is only eclipsed by how we are building.

In summary, The Law Of The Shofar in New Testament realizations is unveiled through the five-fold ministry. So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. How shall the people hear if there is no man to sound the shofar? Again, what value does preaching without hearing and ultimately responding hold for us? The famine of latter days will be in the arena of hearing the Word of God. The revelation of the unity between both the one blowing and those that must hear thoroughly by responding explains the inner framework of this current spiritual famine.

Much blame is to be equally shared today by both the blower of the shofar and the perspective hearers. Imposters and deceivers are sending out confusing sounds that are cultivating unbiblical, if not a myriad of demonic responses. This chaos leads into the spiritual abyss we understand as "the famine" of these last days that Amos warned us of in chapter 8. "They shall wander from sea to sea... they shall run to and fro" to seek a word from God, but they shall not find it.

Let us lift up our voices, and with great plainness of speech, let us declare the whole counsel of God. With a clear note and a certain sound, let us preach, preach, preach. Blow the shofar. It is imperative that we fulfill all the Law Of The Shofar. Our prayer should be: Give us ears to hear; Give us faith to believe; Give us a mind to receive; Give us a heart to respond; Give us the courage to boldly declare and to faithfully persevere.

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