

Shofar Blowing for Rosh Hashanah 5781/2020

 rabbinicalassembly.org/story/shofar-blowing-rosh-hashanah-57812020

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Please note that this is not an official responsum of the CJLS.

Because of the potential of the release of dangerous levels of aerosols in the act of Shofar blowing, many communities are contemplating ways to do Shofar blowing outdoors and for smaller groups. Some communities are contemplating having outdoor, neighborhood-based shofar blowing. Shofar blowing indoors would require extreme distancing and could contaminate a significant area of an indoor sanctuary for a significant amount of time, even with a barrier of plexiglass or plastic between the shofar blower and everyone else.

Other communities are exploring the purchase and distribution of shofarot among congregants.

A minority approach suggests that one can fulfill one's obligation for hearing the shofar through amplified electronic means in cases of extreme duress (Tzitz Eliezer 8:11).

It is traditional to hear 100 blasts of the Shofar on each day of Rosh Hashanah, but this is clearly a custom that goes beyond the minimum. Discussions of the obligatory number of blasts are based on Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:9: "סֵדֶר תְּקִיעוֹת, שָׁלֹשׁ, שָׁלֹשׁ, שָׁלֹשׁ: There are to be three sets of three threes."

According to BT Rosh Hashanah 34a-b, and as summarized in O.H. 590:1-2: each of these three sets of blasts should be of the form 'teki'ah, teruah, teki'ah' -- but because the exact identity of the 'teruah' as described in tannaitic literature is in doubt (it could be what we refer to as a 'teruah,' or what we refer to as 'shevarim,' or both of these together, 'shevarim-teruah'). It is traditional to blow sufficient blasts to take all three of these possibilities into account. I.e. it is traditional to blow the following pattern:

Teki'ah-shevarim-teruah-teki'ah (3x)

Teki'ah-shevarim-teki'ah (3x)

Teki'ah-teru'ah-teki'ah (3x)

These 30 blasts are considered the minimum for *de'oraita* fulfillment of the mitzvah of Shofar.

The core obligation of Shofar blowing are the three sets of blasts that follow the Malkhuyot, Zikhronot and Shofarot sections of the Amidah (even though these are not the blasts that immediately follow the berakhah for Shofar blowing); however, one's obligation is still met when blowing these blasts separate from the Musaf Amidah.

For a "neighborhood shofar blowing" approach for Rosh Hashanah 5781, in which a number of Shofar blowers will do Shofar blowing in congregants' neighborhoods, or in which congregants will arrive to an outdoor location to hear the shofar blowing, we recommend the following procedure for Sunday, September 20 (the 2nd day of Rosh Hashanah, as the 1st day of Rosh Hashanah is Shabbat and the Shofar is not blown):

1. The Shofar should be blown only under medically safe conditions. As of this writing, blowing the shofar outdoors, directing it away from people, and blown by someone who is healthy appear to be the recommended procedures, but communities should seek up-to-date information from their local health authorities.
2. The Shofar berakhot (לשמע קול שופר, שהחיינו) should be recited before the Shofar blowing. If this Shofar blower is blowing the Shofar in a few different locations for different groups of people, it is preferable for those subsequent listeners to say the berakhot themselves, but it is permissible for the Shofar blower to recite the berakhot, even repeatedly. (Terumat HaDeshen Responsum #140) See the CJLS guidance on Multiple Recitations.
3. One should fulfill the Shofar obligation of others by blowing 30 blasts in the following order:

Teki'ah-shevarim-teru'ah-teki'ah (3x)

Teki'ah-shevarim-teki'ah (3x)

Teki'ah-teruah-teki'ah (3x),

though substituting the final 'tekiah' with a 'teki'ah gedolah' (it is customary to conclude with a 'teki'ah gedolah,' though this is a strongly held minhag rather than halakhah)

4. Shofar blowing at the conclusion of Yom Kippur has the status of a minhag. It is not a mitzvah incumbent upon the individual.
5. The use of a *makri* (person who calls out the names of the notes) is a minhag. For a private shofar blowing, or a neighborhood shofar blowing, it is optional. (O.H. 585:4 ReMA)

For congregations seeking to help congregants purchase shofarot, online tutorials on how to blow the shofar sounds should be offered, including links to existing videos (here's an [example](#)). Care should be taken that shofarot purchased are easy to blow (and are not odiferous). See [here](#).