

# Shabbat's Silent Shofar

## Rosh Hashanah Learning 5781

Congregation Kehillath Israel  
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### Leviticus 23:24

Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts.

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן  
זָכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ

### Numbers 29:1

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded.

וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ  
מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל־מְלָאכֶת  
עַבְדֶּיךָ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ יוֹם תְּרוּעָה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם

- What associations do you have with regards to hearing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah?
- What emotions does the shofar illicit for you?
- How does the shofar impact your spiritual experience of the holiday?

### Rambam on Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:1

And the reason Shofar blowing was banned on Shabbat, a decree, lest one carry one's shofar 4 *amot* in the Public Domain (on Shabbat), just like a *lulav*, neither of which are in and of themselves a labor forbidden on the Shabbat.

והטעם שבעבורו נאסרה תקיעת שופר  
בשבת גזירה שמא יטלנו בידו ויעבירונו  
ד' אמות ברשות הרבים כמו שבארנו  
בלולב לפי שתקיעת שופר אינה  
מלאכה.

### Mishneh Torah, Shofar, Lulav, and Sukkah 2:10

At this time that we make two days [of Rosh Hashanah] in the Exile — in the same way that we blow on the first, so too do we blow on the second. And if the first day fell out on Shabbat and there was no court fitting to blow in that place, we blow only on the second.

בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה שָׂאֵנוּ עוֹשִׂין שְׁנֵי יָמִים בְּגָלוּת  
כְּדֶרֶךְ שְׁתּוֹקְעִין בְּרֵאשׁוֹן תּוֹקְעִין בְּשֵׁנִי.  
וְאִם חָל יוֹם רֵאשׁוֹן לְהִיּוֹת בְּשַׁבָּת וְלֹא  
הָיָה בְּמָקוֹם בֵּית דִּין הָרְאוּיִין לְתַקֵּעַ  
תּוֹקְעִין בְּשֵׁנִי בְּלִבְדּוֹ

- What's at the heart of not blowing the shofar on Shabbat?
- How do you experience (or could you imagine experiencing) the impact (spiritually, emotionally, intellectually) of not hearing the shofar sounded on Rosh Hashanah? In other words, what void is created?
- How might we think about that voided space in our holiday experience that's created?
- There is a practice of hearing shofar every day (except Shabbat) of the month of Elul leading up to Rosh Hashanah. How might that practice shift one's experience of not hearing shofar sounded on the first day of Rosh Hashanah this year?

### Talmud Bavli, Rosh Hashanah 29b

The Gemara asks: From where are these matters; from where is it derived that the shofar is not sounded on Shabbat? Rabbi Levi bar Laḥma said that Rabbi Ḥama bar Ḥanina said: One verse says, with regard to Rosh HaShana: “A solemn rest, a memorial of blasts” (Leviticus 23:24), which indicates that one should merely remember the shofar without actually sounding it. And another verse says: “It is a day of blowing for you” (Numbers 29:1), i.e., a day on which one must actually sound the shofar. This apparent contradiction is not difficult: Here, the verse in which the shofar is only being remembered but not sounded, is referring to a Festival that occurs on Shabbat; there, the verse in which the shofar is actually sounded, is referring to a Festival that occurs on a weekday.

מנה"מ אמר רבי לוי בר לחמא אמר רבי חמא בר חנינא כתוב אחד אומר (ויקרא כג, כד) שבתון זכרון תרועה וכתוב אחד אומר (במדבר כט, א) יום תרועה יהיה לכם לא קשיא כאן ביו"ט שחל להיות בשבת כאן ביום טוב שחל להיות בחול

### Rosh Hashana Shacharit, Repetition of the Amidah (from the piyut "Sh'mo m'faarim")

Leader: When the holy sacrifice [Isaac] was ready in his eyes, [Abraham] bound its replacement, a ram, to offer before [God],

חזן: זָבַח קֹדֶשׁ כְּהִכָּשֵׁר אֶזְבְּעִינִי. רָגַל תְּמוּרָתוֹ אֵיל לְהַקְרִיב לְפָנָיו

Congregation: "after it had been caught in the the bush by its horns."

קהל: אַחַר נֶאֱחַז בְּסִבְךָ בְּקַרְנָיו

Leader: [God] instructed his offspring to blow in this month; if this day falls on the holy Shabbat,

חזן: חֲנֻם חֲנִיטָיו לְתַקֵּעַ בְּזֶה הַחֹדֶשׁ. יוֹם זֶה אִם יִקְרָה בְּשַׁבַּת קֹדֶשׁ

Congregation: "it shall be a memory of the *teruah*, a holy moment."

קהל: זְכוֹרֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ

Leader: Its nature if it falls on a weekday, command everyone to blow throughout your borders,

חזן: טְבַעוּ אִם בְּחַל יְבוֹאֲכֶם. צֹו לְתַקֵּעַ בְּכָל גְּבוּלְכֶם

Congregation: "a day of *teruah* shall be for you."

קהל: יוֹם תְּרוּעָה יִהְיֶה לְכֶם

- Both texts above speak of “remembering” the shofar when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. How do you receive that instruction?
- What is your “memory of the *teruah*” and how might you relate to it this year?
- How is memory flawed? In what ways is memory “better” or “worse” than hearing a literal sound?
- What possibilities exist within memory? What limitations?
- How might the absence of literal sound today (RH Day 1) make for a more powerful experience tomorrow (RH Day 2)?