

Hearing the Shofar on Yom Teruah

Some Reflections

notes by Tim Hegg

In the principle texts on Rosh Hashanah (Lev. 23:23-25; Num 29:1), the festival itself is primarily marked by the blowing of the shofar. Interestingly, neither text explains why a yearly festival is centered around the blowing of the shofar. We should presume, therefore, that the meanings attached to the sounding of the shofar in the ancient Israelite nation were to be specifically emphasized on this day.

The following are a few examples from the Tanach that describe various occasions on which the shofar was blown. From these we may seek to understand its import for the Yom Teruah.

1. Exodus 19:16

So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

- a. The blowing of the shofar called the people to pay close attention, to give heed to what was about to happen.
- b. The blowing of the shofar announced that the King was about to speak—to give His Torah for His people.

Lessons: How is God attempting to get our attention? What specific aspect of His word is He urging upon us, to which He is calling each of us to pay attention? Are we willing to submit to Him as our King and give to Him the honor He deserves?

2. Ezekiel 33:4

then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head.

- a. The blowing of the shofar alerts of danger.
- b. It is the responsibility of the prophets (like Ezekiel) to sound the warning blast.

Lessons: Are we heeding the warnings of the prophets, especially regarding the end-times? Is there a spiritual component of our daily walk with Yeshua that we have neglected?

3. Amos 3:6

If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not Adonai done it?

- a. Like an air-raid siren, the sound of the shofar caused a sense of trembling for what it signalled.
- b. Such a shofar blast marked the presence of danger—a danger of divine proportions.

Lessons: Do we have a proper fear of God, humbling ourselves under His mighty hand? Have we taken the kindness of God for granted?

4. Zeph. 1:14-16 / 1 Thess 4:16-18

Near is the great day of the L-rd, near and coming very quickly...
A day of trumpet and battle cry (shout).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout (battle cry), with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- a. The final day of the Lord is announced with a trumpet call, as a warrior coming to conquer His enemies and rescue His people.
- b. The day marks utter destruction for all who have rejected God's rule, but peace and victory for those who belong to Him.

Lessons: if Yeshua were to return today, would you be ready? Would He find you being faithful to Him? Are you anticipating His arrival (cf. 1Jn 3:1-3)?

----- "Take heed" -----
(Some occurrences of βλέπω as imperative in the Apostolic Scriptures)

1. *Don't be confused by false teaching and false teachers*

And Yeshua answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you." (Matt 24:4, cf. Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8)

2. *Don't base your faith upon traditions*

And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." (Mark 8:15)

In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places..." (Mark 12:38)

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; (Phil 3:2)

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Messiah. (Col 2:8)

3. *Don't listen to false prophets*

Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. (Mark 13:33)

And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. (Luke 21:8)

4. *Don't be a foolish craftsman as you do your part to build the Kingdom*

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. (1Cor. 3:10)

Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." (Col 4:17)

But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. (1Cor. 8:9)

5. *Don't be characterized by pride*

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. (1Cor 10:12)

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise.... (Eph 5:15)

6. *Don't ever allow the glory of Yeshua to be diminished*

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. (2John 8)

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. (Heb 3:12)

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,
let us also lay aside every encumbrance
and the sin which so easily entangles us,
and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
fixing our eyes on Yeshua,
the author and perfecter of faith,
Who for the joy set before Him
endured the cross,
despising the shame,
and has sat down
at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Heb 12:1-2