



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

1. Know When to Blow
2. Answer to Yiddle Riddle



Aaron Ahuvia <aaron\_Ahuvia@ccmail.bus.umich.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Rosh Hashanah will soon be with us, and this year we will not be blowing the shofar on the first day because it is Shabbat. I would like to understand more deeply why we have this custom. Is it because we don't use ritual objects on Shabbat? But we read from the Torah on Shabbat? Or is forbidden like other musical instruments, since if they break you might come to fix them? But how likely is it that a shofar will break?

Dear Aaron Ahuvia,

You're right, there's no prohibition against using 'ritual objects' on Shabbat. As you said, we read the Torah scroll on Shabbat.

Is the shofar forbidden on a 'Shabbat Rosh Hashanah' because of the prohibition against musical instruments? That can't be the only reason, and here's why not:

True, on a **regular** Shabbat, musical instruments — including shofars — are forbidden. But musical instruments are forbidden on Rosh Hashanah, too! So obviously, the mitzva of blowing shofar on Rosh Hashanah is an **exception**; otherwise, the mitzvah of shofar could never be fulfilled.

Rather, the reason is as follows: Everyone wants to fulfill his obligation to hear the shofar, but not everyone knows how to blow the shofar. Someone might bring his shofar to an expert to learn how, and thereby accidentally desecrate Shabbat by carrying the shofar outside.

Now, back to your original question: What's the difference between blowing a shofar and reading the Torah scroll? Someone might desecrate Shabbat by bringing a Torah scroll to a learned person to read it for him!

One difference is that the mitzva of shofar can be fulfilled alone, whereas the public Torah reading on Shabbat is, well,

public: You need ten people to read it. The more people there are, the less likelihood anyone will accidentally transgress Shabbat, because the others will remind him. Also, due to the extreme holiness and honor of a Torah scroll, a person thinks twice before picking it up and carrying it outside.

I once heard a beautiful idea which can be learned from this Rabbinic decree, an idea especially appropriate for Rosh Hashanah:

One might ask: "How often will it happen that someone forgets it's Shabbat and carries a shofar outside?"

Not very often.

"How learned is the person for whom the Sages made this decree?"

Not necessarily so learned.

"And how **Jewish** is the community in which this person lives?"

Not too very. There's not even a synagogue where he can go to hear the shofar blowing.

Nevertheless, the Sages of Israel forfeited their own mitzva — sacrificing their own spiritual elevation and that of the entire nation — for the sake of some simple, perhaps unlearned Jew, living far from the hub of any major Jewish community. They cared about him, concerned that he, too, keep Shabbat properly. **This highlights the inseparable connection shared by all Jews, that we should care about each other and unite as one people.**

As to your question, "How likely is it that a shofar will break?" I don't know, but it so happens that last year on Rosh Hashanah my shofar broke. I fixed it after Rosh Hashanah by soaking it in boiling water until it softened, then repaired it and let it harden!

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 588:5, Taz, Mishna Brurah 13

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 143:1
- Ran to Tractate Rosh Hashana ch. 4.
- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 135:14

# Yiddle Riddle

*Last week we asked* Which tractate's name is the antonym of the name of the Order (*sefer*) of which it is part?

**Answer:** '*Chullin*,' the tractate whose name means 'non-holy things' is part of the order '*Kodshim*,' — 'holy things.'

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