



HILLEL'S JOSEPH MEYERHOFF  
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# 50 Ways to use a Shofar Here's Two!

## Improving Yourself

*Maimonides: The Laws of Return*  
Chapter III Halacha 4

ד אע"פ שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזירת הכתוב רמוז יש בו כלומר עורו ישינים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם, אלו השוכחים את האמת בהבלי הזמן ושוגים כל שנתם בהבל וריק אשר לא יועיל ולא יציל הביטו לנפשותיכם והטיבו דרכיכם ומעלליכם ויעזוב כל אחד מכם דרכו הרעה ומחשבתו אשר לא טובה, לפיכך צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה כאילו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב, וכן כל העולם חציו זכאי וחציו חייב, חטא חטא אחד הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף חובה וגרם לו השחתה, עשה מצוה אחת הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף זכות וגרם לו ולהם תשועה והצלה שנאמר וצדיק יסוד עולם זה שצדק הכריע את כל העולם לזכות והצילו, ומפני ענין זה נהגו כל בית ישראל להרבות בצדקה ובמעשים טובים ולעסוק במצות מראש השנה ועד יום הכפורים יתר מכל השנה...

Even though blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a blind decree, its function has strong intimations. It's as if it says:

"Wake up sleepy ones from your slumbers, seek out your deeds, rethink and return and remember your Creator. Wake up, those who forget the truth in their idle use of time and mistakenly use their years in empty and frivolous activity which does not help and will not save. You should look at your souls and improve your ways and your designs. Everyone must leave their evil ways, and their thoughts which are not good."

Therefore every person must see him/herself the year round as if his/her life as having committed an equal amount of good and bad deeds. Similarly, the world should be seen as having committed an equal amount of good and bad deeds. If one commits a transgression s/he has tipped the scales and the scales of the world toward destruction.

If one performs a mitzvah s/he has tipped her/his scales and the scales of the world toward salvation, as it is written: "The righteous are the foundation of the world." The one who affirms the world tips the scale and the scale of the world toward merit and has therefore saved it.

Because of this, all of Israel is engaged in giving *tzedaka*, and doing good deeds as well as other commandments during the days in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur even more than other days of the year.

### **YOUR MAIMONIDES NAVIGATOR**

1. Maimonides says that the very sound of the shofar alludes to the work of this season. What is it about the sound of the shofar that makes us feel this way.
2. In many ways the Shofar is seen here as an alarm clock. What does waking up from slumbers mean according to him?
3. What does it mean to live your life as one who sees him/herself as "having committed an equal amount of good and bad deeds"?
4. Is this empowering or daunting? Why?
5. How would you use this material on campus?

### **ADAPTING TEXTS TO THE PEOPLE YOU SERVE**

1. Identify your target audience and adapt your program accordingly.
2. Use the shofar to herald participation in any gathering during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
3. Organize a "Let the Shofar wake you up" campaign and use this period for engaging in a pet *tzedaka* project.
4. If one person can change the world by doing one mitzvah, what can be done to change something you don't like in yourself?
5. Write a postcard making a Jewish New Year resolution. Resolve to return an aspect of your behavior to your ideal self. Write it down and give it to a Hillel professional who will promise to send it back to you in time for the secular New Year.
6. Think of other ways to use the Shofar to bring people together to prepare for Rosh Hashanah.

# Making It Right With Each Other

## Waking up to those around you



עֲבֵרוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ, אִין יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים מִכִּפֵּר, עַד שְׂרִצָּה אֶת חֵבְרוֹ...

“Praying on Yom Kippur won’t do anything for the wrongs committed to your friends until you first make it right with your friends.”  
(Mishna Yoma 8:9)

The whole purpose of Yom Kippur is to start with a clean slate. The slate can’t be cleaned if you haven’t straightened things out with those you have hurt or those who have hurt you.

### Learning by doing

1. Create an activity which encourages healing relationships.
2. Use the shofar to draw people to the table.
3. Have a supply of stamped envelopes for people to address and use to send messages to each other.
4. Now that they have attempted to fix things with their friends, talk to them about fixing things with themselves.
5. Dream of other activities that can be done with a shofar.
6. Find somebody with “good chops” to offer two minute shofar blowing lessons, and have a handout ready to teach them what the shofar is all about.