



בס"ד Laws & Customs: Ba'al Tokeiah

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PLEASE NOTE: THIS HALACHA GUIDE IS INTENDED AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE [ROSH HASHANA HALACHA GUIDE](#) WHICH CONTAINS SOME OF THE BASIC HALACHOS OF TEKIAS SHOFAR; THE DETAILS MENTIONED THERE ARE NOT REPEATED HERE.

THE BA'AL TOKEIAH

The Ba'al Tokeiah must be a Halachically competent male over the age of Bar Mitzvah. [Even if a boy is over the age of thirteen, it must still be established that he has reached puberty and has the Halachic status of a Bar Mitzvah.]

One should not take payment for blowing the Shofar, due to the prohibition of *S'char Shabbos*, unless the salary is devised in a manner which is permissible.

On each morning of *Rosh Hashana*, the Ba'al Tokeiah should learn the Maamar entitled "L'Hovin Inyan Tekias Shofar" which is printed in (newer editions of) the *Machzor*. It is a relatively long Maamar, so the Ba'al Tokeiah should allocate sufficient time to learn it.

The Ba'al Tokeiah should be well versed in the Halachos so that he is aware of what constitutes a mistake and how to properly correct it.

The Ba'al Tokeiah does not wear a Kittel.

THE SHOFAR

The minimum length of the Shofar is a *Tefach* (8 cm).

Ideally, the Shofar should be of a ram. In the absence of that, any Shofar is acceptable as long as it derives from a *Kosher* animal, it is not of a cow, and it is the type of Shofar that is naturally hollow, as opposed to the horn of many undomesticated animals.

Ideally, the Shofar should be bent. In the absence of that, an unbent Shofar is still acceptable.

It is appropriate to use a Shofar produced under rabbinic supervision. This is because some Shofaros available on the market have holes or cracks sealed in a manner that is not Halachically acceptable, and these are often difficult for a novice to detect.

One may assume that his friend consents to his Shofar being borrowed for the sake of performing the Mitzvah, as long as the Shofar remains in its general vicinity at all times, and it is returned to exactly the same place and in the same condition.

There are many Halachos concerning a Shofar with a hole or crack. [Some of these Halachos are no longer extant in the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Oruch*.] Achronim advise that it is best to avoid a Shofar with any holes or cracks in order to avoid any problems.

It is a good idea to check the Shofar for holes and cracks by filling it with water and checking for leaks. [One may fill the Shofar even on *Yom Tov*, whether for this purpose, or to clean and polish it.]

Any plating on the Shofar renders it *Possul* if:

- It is at the mouthpiece.
- It lengthens the Shofar at either side – even ever so slightly.
- It changes the natural sound or pitch of the Shofar.

A Shofar with engravings is *Kosher*.

On *Rosh Hashana*, the Shofar is deemed a *K'li Shemlacho L'Hetter* even after the Mitzvah has been fulfilled. It may therefore be handled in order to move it out of the way, or in order to safeguard it. However, one may not derive any non-Mitzvah benefit from the Shofar on *Rosh Hashana*, being that it is designated for a Mitzvah.

Once the Shofar is no longer needed for blowing, one may no longer carry it in a public domain, unless he is returning it back to a safe location.

THE BROCHOS

When one already fulfilled the Mitzvah of Shofar and blows for another person, the listener (whether male or female) should recite the Brochos if they know how. When blowing for several people, one of the males may make the Brochos and have in mind to be *Moitzie* all the others.

If the listener does not know the Brochos, the Ba'al Tokeiah may make the Brochos on behalf of a male (or prompt him word by word), but not for a female, in which case he blows without the Brochos.

A boy of the age of *Chinuch* (i.e. old enough to understand the concept of *Tekias Shofar*) is obligated to hear Shofar. The boy should make the Brochos. If he does not know how, the adult recites the Brochos for him (or prompts him word by word).

When blowing Shofar in a hospital or in an old age home, one should be mindful

as to whether it is a place where the Brochos may be recited. If it is not, he blows the Shofar without making the Brochos.

The Shofar should be covered with a cloth until after the Brochos – as well as when it is set down during each of the breaks between the different sets of Tekios.

The one making the Brochos must have in mind to be *Moitzie* everyone who may be listening to the Brochos and Tekios.

If the Ba'al Tokeiah wants to fulfil the Mitzvah at a later time (such as when doing *Mivtzoim* prior to *davening*), he should have in mind to be *Moitzie* the listener(s) but not himself.

There is a dispute whether *Shehecheyanu* is recited on the second day of *Rosh Hashana*. Ideally, the Ba'al Tokeiah should wear a new garment and have in mind both the Mitzvah and the garment when reciting *Shehecheyanu*. However, he still recites *Shehecheyanu* if he does not have a new garment.

BLOWING THE SHOFAR

In *Shule*, the Ba'al Tokeiah stands at the *Bimah* for the Tekios before *Musaf*. He does not need to stand at the *Bimah* for the Tekios during *Musaf*, and may instead stand at his usual place.

The Ba'al Tokeiah must recite the Brochos and blow Shofar whilst standing unsupported, without leaning on anything. If this is not possible, or after the fact, the Mitzvah is fulfilled even if he was sitting.

When blowing, the Ba'al Tokeiah must have in mind to be *Moitzie* everyone who may be listening to the Tekios.

If possible, one should hold the Shofar with his right hand.

If possible, one should blow the Shofar from the right side of his mouth.

If possible, the wide opening of the Shofar should face upwards, and not sideways or downwards.

If one cannot conclude all the Tekios, another person may continue from that point on. He does not repeat the Brochos (unless he didn't hear these Brochos, nor did he hear the Tekios beforehand).

One should ensure that those listening to the Shofar hear its actual sound, and not just a reverberation or echo.

One should blow **all** of the *Tekios* after sunrise (5:52 / 5:51 am) and before sunset (6:26 / 6:27 pm). [In extenuating circumstances (as can occur on *Mivtzoim*), or after the fact, it is acceptable if blown **all** after dawn (4:33 / 4:32 am) with a *Brocho*, or before *Tzeis* (6:54pm) without a *Brocho* (unless it is Friday evening).]

🕊 PAUSES & BREATHS DURING TEKIOS

Each of the *Shofar* sounds (i.e. each *Tekiah*, *Shevarim* and *Teruah*) must be blown in one breath.

One must breathe between each of the *Shofar* sounds (with the exception of the *Shevarim-Teruah* sounded **before** *Musaf*, as noted below.) If one did not do so, he must redo it. [If it can no longer be redone, the *Mitzvah* has still been fulfilled, as long as there was at least a pause between each of the *Shofar* sounds.]

In the *Tekios* **before** *Musaf*, there should be a slight pause between the *Shevarim* and *Teruah*, but no breath. The same applies for the *Tekios* after *Musaf*, as well as the *Tekios* blown for people who were not in *Shule*.

In the *Tekios* **during** *Musaf*, one should take a small breath between the *Shevarim* and *Teruah*, but not pause any longer than that.

If one did not pause at all between any two sounds (besides between the *Shevarim-Teruah*), it is invalid.

🕊 IDEAL LENGTH OF THE TEKIOS

The length of each *Shofar* blast is measured in “*Terumatin*” which corresponds to the length of one short blast of the *Teruah*. The ideal length of the blasts are as follows:

תשר"ת:

Tekiah – Eighteen *terumatin* or more.

Shevarim – Each of the three blasts should be exactly three *terumatin*.

Teruah – Nine *terumatin* or more. Our custom is to do many more.

תש"ת:

Tekiah – Nine *terumatin* or more.

Shevarim – Each of the three blasts should be exactly three *terumatin*.

תר"ת:

Tekiah – Nine *terumatin* or more.

Teruah – Nine *terumatin* or more. Our custom is to do many more.

🕊 IF THE SOUNDS ARE TOO SHORT

תשר"ת ח:

If the *Tekiah* was shorter than eighteen *terumatin*, it is still valid as long as it was at least nine *terumatin* – but only if each of the three *Shevarim* sounds was less than nine *terumatin* each.

If any of the three *Shevarim* sounds was longer than eighteen *terumatin*, it is invalid.

If any of the three *Shevarim* sounds was between nine and eighteen *terumatin*, it is valid only if the *Tekiah* was eighteen *terumatin* or more.

If any of the three *Shevarim* sounds was between three and nine *terumatin*, it is acceptable.

If one of the *Shevarim* sounds was shorter than three *terumatin* and another sound of the same *Shevarim* was longer than nine *terumatin*, it is invalid.

If all of the *Shevarim* sounds were shorter than three *terumatin*, it is acceptable as long as each was discernibly longer than the *Teruah* sounds.

תש"ת ח:

If the *Tekiah* was shorter than nine *terumatin*, it is still acceptable if it was at least six *terumatin* – but only if each of the three *Shevarim* sounds was less than six *terumatin* each.

If any of the three *Shevarim* sounds was longer than nine *terumatin*, it is invalid.

If any of the three *Shevarim* sounds was between six and nine *terumatin*, it is valid only if the *Tekiah* was nine *terumatin* or more.

If any of the three *Shevarim* sounds was between three and six *terumatin*, it is acceptable.

If one of the *Shevarim* sounds was shorter than three *terumatin* and another sound of the same *Shevarim* was longer than six *terumatin*, it is invalid.

If all of the *Shevarim* sounds were shorter than three *terumatin*, it is acceptable as long as each was discernibly longer than the *Teruah* sounds.

תר"ת ח:

If the *Tekiah* or the *Teruah* was shorter than nine *Terumatin*, it is acceptable if it was at least three *Terumatin*.

🕊 IF THE SOUNDS ARE INCORRECT

Prefatory note: A “*Bava*” refers to a set of two *Tekios* and its intervening blast(s). A “*Seder*” refers to a set of three “*Bavos*”.

When one makes the following mistakes, he is required just to repeat the sound correctly, but does not have to return to the beginning of that *Bava*:

- If he attempted to blow a *Tekiah* but it was too short.
- In תשר"ת, if he blew only one or two *Shevarim* sounds before he began the *Teruah*, and he did not take a breath in between.

When one makes the following mistakes, he is required to return to the beginning of that *Bava* (i.e. the preceding *Tekiah*):

תשר"ת ח:

- If he blew even one *Teruah* before the *Shevarim*.
- If he blew additional *Shevarim* sounds after he finished a proper *Shevarim* and took a breath.
- If he blew additional *Teruos* after he finished a *Teruah* of at least three *terumatin* and took a breath.
- If he blew only one or two *Shevarim*, took a breath, and began the *Teruah*.

תש"ת ח:

- If he blew additional *Shevarim* sounds after he finished a proper *Shevarim* and took a breath.
- If he blew even one *Teruah* sound at any point.

תר"ת ח:

- If he blew additional *Teruos* after he finished a *Teruah* of at least three *terumatin* and took a breath.
- If he blew even one *Shevarim* sound at any point.

If the *Ba'al Tokeiah* did not realize that he made a mistake which requires him to return to the beginning of the *Bava*, he should redo that entire *Bava* at his earliest opportunity. Nevertheless, if he realized whilst in the midst of a subsequent *Seder*, he should complete that *Seder* before redoing the *Bava*.

Mistakes made in the thirty sounds customarily blown after *Musaf* technically do not need to be corrected. However, if there is even the slightest possibility that someone present is relying on these *Tekios* to fulfil his obligation, any mistake must be corrected as per above.



When blowing *Shofar* for a man who cannot or will not listen to all thirty blasts (a possibility on *Mivtzoim*), one adopts **either** of the following approaches, without reciting a *Brocho*:

- One should blow תשר"ת תשר"ת תשר"ת, making sure to breathe between the *Shevarim* and *Teruah*, and (both the blower and the listener) having in mind that any blasts not required *Min-Hatorah* are being blown for ulterior purposes, and not for the sake of the *Mitzvah*.
- One should blow תשר"ת תשר"ת תשר"ת, making sure to breathe between the *Shevarim* and *Teruah*, and (both the blower and the listener) having in mind that any blasts not required *Min-Hatorah* are being blown for ulterior purposes, and not for the sake of the *Mitzvah*.

These techniques should be adopted only in exceptional circumstances, when there is absolutely no other choice. [Each technique has certain advantages over the other. Even so, the second approach does not have clear basis in the works of the *Poskim*, and also seems less practical, as it is unlikely that the listener on *Mivtzoim* will grasp the nuances of the intentions he will need to have.]