



בס"ד Laws & Customs: Ba'al Tokeiah

For the year 5780

According to Minhag Chabad
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To subscribe: bit.ly/Halacha

Comments or questions: rabbi@youngyeshivah.com.au

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 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 knows how to properly correct any mistake.

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, and it is the type of *Shofar* that is naturally hollow, as opposed to the horn of a cow and 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 which are almost impossible 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 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. [This may be done even on *Yom Tov*.]

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 on behalf of 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 *Baal 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* himself, another person may continue from that point onwards. He does not need to repeat the *Brochos* (unless he didn't hear it the first time around).

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 (5:58 / 5:57 am) and before sunset (6:23 / 6:24 pm).

In extenuating circumstances (as can occur on *Mivtzoim*), or after the fact, it is acceptable if blown after dawn (4:39 / 4:37 am) with a *Brocho*, or before *Tzeis* (6:50 / 6:51 pm) without a *Brocho*.

🌀 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 this amount.

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 this amount.

🌀 IF THE SOUNDS ARE TOO SHORT

תשר"ת:

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:

If the *Tekiah* was shorter than nine *terumatin*, it is still acceptable if it is 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:

If the *Tekiah* or the *Teruah* was shorter than nine *Terumatin*, it is acceptable if it is 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:

- 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:

- 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:

- 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 תש"ת תר"ת.
- 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 of these techniques have certain advantages over the other. It is therefore hard to establish which is the better option. However, the second approach seems less practical, as it is unlikely that someone on *Mivtzoim* will grasp the nuances of the intentions he needs to have.]