

Kingship, Remembrances and Shofars

Analyzing the Structure of the Rosh Hashanah Musaf

A basic overview of the Scriptural and Talmudic sources for the three-part structure of the Rosh Hashanah Musaf prayer plus its deeper meaning as embodied by two Chasidic parables.

Text 1a

Numbers 10:10

10. On the days of your rejoicing, on your festivals and on your new-moon celebrations, you shall blow on the trumpets for your ascent-offerings and your peace sacrifices, and it shall be a remembrance before your God; I am the Lord your God.

Text 1b

Rashi ad loc.

I am the Lord your God: From here we learn that [on the New Year Festival (Rosh HaShanah)] the verses proclaiming God's kingship (מְלֻכֵיּוֹת) [are recited] with [verses of] remembrances (זְכוֹרוֹנוֹת) and [verses] relating to the shofar (שׁוֹפָרוֹת), for it says, "You shall blow"-this refers to the שׁוֹפָרוֹת; "a remembrance"-this refers to זְכוֹרוֹנוֹת; "I am the Lord your God"-this refers to מְלֻכֵיּוֹת. - [from Sifrei]

Text 2

Talmud, Rosh Hashana 32a

Mishnah: ...said r. Akiva [the rule is as follows]. [the chazan for musaf] says [the blessing of] the patriarchs and of the resurrection and of the sanctification of the name, and says the kingship-verses along with the sanctification of the day and blows the shofar, then he says the remembrance-verses and blows, and the shofar-verses and blows. Then he says the temple service blessing and the thanksgiving and the blessing of the priests.

Text 3

Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 34b

The [Shofar] blasts and the blessings of Rosh HaShanah... are [all] required to fulfill one's obligation. What is the rationale?

Rabbah explains: "The Holy One, blessed be He, says: 'Recite before Me on Rosh HaShanah [the verses of] Kingship, Remembrance, and Shofars. Kingship, so that you will make Me king over you, Remembrance, so that the remembrance of you will arise before Me for good.'

And how will this all be accomplished? With the Shofar."

Text 4a*Leviticus 23:22-24*

22. ...I am the Lord your God.

23. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

24. Speak to the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first of the month, it shall be a Sabbath for you, a remembrance of [Israel through] the sounding of horns, a holy occasion.

Text 4b*Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 32a*

Gemara: ..."A remembrance" indicates the remembrance-verses. "Sounding of horns" indicates shofar-verses.

"I am the Lord your God," [and immediately afterwards], "In the seventh month," this [juxtaposition] indicates kingship-verses.

Text 5*Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Shofar 3:8*

These three intermediate blessings recited on Rosh Hashanah... [namely:] Kingship, Remembrance, and Shofars - are each dependent on each other.

In each of these blessings, one is required to recite ten verses reflecting the content of the blessing - three verses from the Torah, three from the Book of Psalms, three from [the words of] the prophets, and one more verse from the Torah.