

What kind of Shofar is Kosher for Rosh haShana?

Traditionally, in all Sephardic communities of the Diaspora, the most common Shofar used is the ram's Shofar. Lately the antelope Shofar (which is about 3 or 4 times longer than the regular Shofar) became very popular, probably because it is easier to blow than the ram's Shofar and it has a beautiful deep sound. The question, then, is if we can use the antelope or any other animal's Shofar for Rosh haShana?

There are many animals that have horns: Rams, cows (bulls), antelopes, goats, etc. The Chakhamim discussed which Shofarot will be appropriate to use in Rosh haShana. They said, for example, that the cow or the calf horn is not acceptable as a Shofar, since it will be a reminder of the sin of the Golden calf.

Our sages mentioned the ram's horn as the *ideal* Shofar for Rosh haShana, because on Rosh haShana we also remember Akedat Yitzchak (the binding of Yitzchak). The Torah tells us that immediately after the Almighty told Abraham Abinu not to sacrifice his son, Abraham found a ram "caught in the thicket by his horns". He took the ram and offered it as a sacrifice in place of Yitzchak. The ram's horn then, is the most appropriate for Rosh haShana. Later on, the Chakhamim discussed the precise meaning of the statement of the Gemara. Their question was: is the Gemara telling us that because it is the ideal Shofar, we should use *exclusively* the ram's Shofar or is telling us that we should *preferably* use it, but other Shofarot are suitable too? According to haRambam (Maimonides), the Gemara is teaching us that we can use only a ram's horn for Rosh haShana and all other Shofarot are invalid. The Shulchan Arukh took a more lenient approach, saying that a ram's horn is preferable to any other Shofar, but other Shofarot are acceptable too.

Following the Sephardic Minhag, on Rosh haShana -when the Shofar is a Mitzvah from the Torah- we should follow the stricter opinion and use exclusively a ram's Shofar. If for any reason, no ram's Shofar will be available, then we could use other Shofarot. All these restrictions apply only for Rosh haShana. For the Tekiot that we perform during Chodesh Elul and also for the Terua Gedola at the end of Yom Kippur, other Shofarot are acceptable too.

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