

Additional commentary on the symbolism of the shofar blasts and their connection with Sisera's mother

Compiled by Mark Schafer for **"One Hundred Blasts, Two Women, A Single Cry of Grief: A Meditation on Israel/Palestine/Gaza for the High Holy Days, 5786"**

"Notably, according to the earliest translation, the biblical name for Rosh Hashana, 'Yom Teruah' (Numbers 29:1), means 'a day of moaning,' Yom Yevavah (Targum on the Torah). When we hear the shofar blasts, they are not to be heard merely as blasts of a horn, they are a cry to God. On Rosh Hashana the shofar teems with many tears. We cry to God on this day. The cry of the shofar symbolizes not only our personal tears but summon us to hear the cry of others. In the sobbing of the shofar, we are to hear the whimper of a bereaved mother and a bereaved father longing for their beloved child; a husband desperately missing a wife who has passed, a wife longing for her husband who has left this world; the cry of a child for a parent who is no longer present."

("The Shofar: A Mother's Cry," Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider, <https://www.ou.org/holidays/shofar-mothers-cry>, accessed August 20, 2026)

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"The relationship of the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah and the lament of Sisera's mother bears further explanation. Furthermore, if this is the source of the custom of sounding the shofar more times than required, why do we not sound it one hundred and one times?

"The purpose of the sounding of the shofar is to arouse G-d's compassion for the descendants of Yitzchak who was offered like a ram upon the altar, whereas the lament of Sisera's mother was an expression of grief suffused with animosity and hatred. Waiting for her son to return from the battlefield, she imagined that he was busy slaughtering and taking spoils and it was through thoughts such as these that she sought to console herself. Can there be greater cruelty?

"Therefore, we implore: May the one hundred shofar sounds of compassion and mercy nullify every one of those other outcries—except one: the sorrow of a mother over her son. For even the most brutal of mothers is deserving of compassion when she laments her son. Thus, we sound a hundred sounds and not one hundred and one."

"[When] the people of Israel hear the shofar sounded on Rosh Hashanah, they are brought to a level wherein they are indeed capable of bringing about the final redemption. When they sound the shofar in fulfillment of the precepts of the day, their closed hearts are opened, they regret their sins, and their thoughts turn to repentance."

("One Hundred Sounds," Eliyahu Kitov, Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4387/jewish/100-Sounds.htm, accessed August 20, 2026)

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One Jewish tradition states that Rabbi Akiva was a direct descendent of Sisera.

(<https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1033-akiba-ben-joseph>, accessed August 20, 2026)