

Blowing Your Own Horn

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Q: I had to leave davening early one morning in Elul, so I missed hearing the shofar. Is there any reason for me to blow shofar on my own later?

A: The Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer says that after Moshe broke the *luchos*, Hashem summoned him to Har Sinai for the third time on *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, and the shofar was sounded in the camp below to notify the people that Moshe had ascended the mountain and to warn them not to stray after idols. (Moshe returned on Yom Kippur.) Hashem ascended in that shofar blast, as it says (Tehillim 47:6), *Hashem ascended in a teruah*. Therefore, *Chazal* established that the shofar should be blown on *Rosh Chodesh Elul*.



The Sefer Hamanhig cites this Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer and adds that in France they blow the shofar throughout Elul, as is our minhag. The Shulchan Aruch says—and the minhag of the Sefardim accords with his view—to wake up before dawn and say *Selichos* from *Rosh Chodesh Elul*. Both of these practices are based on the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer.

On Rosh Hashanah, *Chazal* instituted that the shofar be blown according to the sequence of the *brachos* of *tefilah b'tzibur—chazaras hashatz*—so we see that Chazal made shofar a *tzibur* practice. (Blowing the shofar is the ultimate form of *tefilah*, as we are calling out to Hashem through the voice of the shofar.) Likewise, *tekias shofar* of *Chodesh Elul* is a *tzibur* practice, and there is no minhag to perform it without a *tzibur*. Of course, if someone wishes to blow shofar on his own to awaken himself to *teshuvah*, he may certainly do so, but that's not a fulfillment of this minhag.