



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Shofar Scents
2. Anonymous Kneeling



We wish all of our readers a *Ketiva v'Chatima Tova*.

Michael R. Leavitt <Mleavitt@his.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I just got a beautiful shofar from a friend returning from Israel. It sounds great, but it has one problem. It smells. But really bad. There were probably some marrow pieces left inside. My question is simple: "How do you clean a shofar?"

- Mishna Berurah 79:29,31 and 586:90
- Bereishit 27:27, Rashi

Dear Michael R. Leavitt

To answer your question, my wife spoke to Mrs. Sarah Glaser, author of *Life Saver! — The Jewish Homemaker's Survival Kit* (Targum/Feldheim). She recommends vinegar or baking soda for removing odors. Pour synthetic vinegar into the shofar. Or dissolve baking soda in water, and pour into the shofar. Rinse and repeat. If necessary, let sit overnight in the vinegar/baking soda solution.

Eliminating a strong odor is important, because such an odor might lessen the honor of the mitzvah, violating the principle that "mitzvot should not be contemptible in your eyes." And if the odor is as bad as you say, it's forbidden to say a blessing in its presence.

But remember, the inside of the shofar needn't compete with perfumes such as *Eau d'Elegance* or *Chanel*. Most shofars retain a slight, lingering reminiscence of their humble origin, the ram.

When Isaac blessed Jacob, Isaac said, 'My son's fragrance is like the fragrance of the field blessed by Hashem.' Of course, Jacob was wearing animal skins on his hands and neck. Perhaps the power of Jacob's mitzvah turned a bad smell into a good one. May Hashem accept our mitzvah of shofar this year, and may all our deeds be sweet-smelling!

Sources:

- *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 79:8-9

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**

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Issue #119 - 14 September 1996 - Rosh Hashanah

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

Sarah Leah wrote via the InterNet:

Dear Rabbi,

I need a reference in Talmud. Is there a place where it says that one may kneel if one has a paper between the knee and the floor?

The issue of kneeling has become a source of conflict for some of us in the 12 Step Programs-AA, etc.). Kneeling is not required for any reason in the 12-Step Program, but it's sort of a tradition to kneel during the 3rd step which says "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him..."

Thank you so much for this service.

Dear Sarah Leah,

The Torah forbids prostrating yourself flat out on a stone floor, as was the way of the ancient idol worshippers. Our Sages extended this prohibition to include kneeling.

The *Shulchan Aruch* says that if you put an intervening substance between your knees and the stone floor, then it's permitted to kneel.

On Yom Kippur, we get on our knees and bow down with our faces to the floor. Many synagogues, especially in Israel, have stone or tile floors, so people bring small towels to bow down upon. I was once in a synagogue where they passed out used computer paper to kneel on!

Sources:

- *Leviticus* 26:1
- *Maimonides, Hilchot Avodat Kochavim* 6:6-8
- *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 131:8

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
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