

## ציצת נבל

### אבנר רמו

An ancient Greek saying: *katorussómenon hupò ton 'elaphon kérias* means: “He put all his money on a ram’s horn.”



In the Talmud a similar idea appears as: **הניח מעותיו על קרן הצבי** - “had put his money on deer’s horn” (Mishnah: ketuboth 13:2).



*Dama dama*

While the ram’s horn is a permanent hollow appendage of the skin, the deer’s antler has a dense bony structure. The antlers begin growing in the winter, and fall off after the mating season (autumn).

The Bible indicates that several species of animal have horns.

In the Book of Genesis we read about ram’s horns:

**וישא אברהם את-עיניו, וירא והנה-איל אחר, נאחז בסבך בקרניו; וילך אברהם ויקח את-האיל, ויעלהו לעלה תחת בנו.**



In the Book of Ezekiel we read:

וישלח תבנית יד, ויקחני בציצת ראשי; ותשא אתי רוח בין-הארץ ובין השמים ותבא אתי  
ירושלמה במראות אלהים,

“And the form of a hand was put forth, and I was taken by a lock of my head; and a spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem” (Eze 8:3).

The Greek translator wrote here: “by the top of my head”, but it is possible that in this vision Ezekiel believed that he was lifted up by his proverbial antlers.

The Prophet Ezekiel relates to Moab as to a צבי (*tsevi*) - “deer” (Eze 25:9), and the Prophet Jeremiah said: תנו-ציץ למואב - “Give wings to Moab” (Jer 48:9).

It is not clear how the English translator determined that here ציץ (*tsits*) means “wings” and such an understanding is not supported by the Greek translator. However, if as Ezekiel said, Moab is like a deer, then according to Jeremiah, buttered Moab deserves to get back its ציץ (*tsits*) - “antler.”

It is rather interesting that the Prophet Jeremiah compares Moab also to an antelope:

נגדעה קרן מואב, וזרעו נשברה

“The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken” (Jer 48:25).

The last hymn (in the Hebrew version) of Book of Psalms says:

הללוהו בתקע שופר; הללוהו בנבל וכוֹנֹר.  
הללוהו בתוף ומחול; הללוהו במנים ועגב.  
הללוהו בצלצלי-שמע; הללוהו בצלצלי תרועה.  
כל הנשמה תהלל יה: הללו-יה.

“Praise Him with the blast of the horn; praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and the pipe. Praise Him with the loud-sounding cymbals; praise Him with the clanging cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise *YH*. Hallelujah” (Ps 150:3-6).

We also read in the same book:

הריעו ליהוה, כל-הארץ; פצחו ורננו וזמרו.  
זמרו ליהוה בכנור; בכנור, וקול זמרה.  
בחצצרות וקול שופר- הריעו, לפני המלך יהוה.

“Shout to *YHWH*, all the earth; break forth and sing for joy, sing praises. Sing praises to *YHWH* with the harp; with the harp and the voice of melody. With trumpets and sound of the horn shout you before the King, *YHWH*” (Ps 98:4-6).

The Greek translator wrote here: “the sound of a horn trumpet” which suggests that it was believed that שופר (*shopfar*) was a type of a trumpet made of a horn.



A modern Shofar made of ram's horn

The source of the word **שופר** (*shophar*) which appears in the Bible 68 times is not certain. Some have suggested that it related to the Akkadian “*sapparu*.” However, “*sapparu*” is the Akkadian name of the fallow deer, and as this animal has antlers and not horns, it is unlikely that **שופר** (*shophar*) relates to the Akkadian “*sapparu*.”

In the Book of Daniel we read:

**והנה צפיר-העזים בא מן-המערב על-פני כל-הארץ, ואין נוגע בארץ; והצפיר-קרן חזות בין עיניו**

“And a he-goat came from the west over the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes” (Dan 8:5; see also: Dan 8:8, 21; Ezr 6:17; 8:35; 2 Ch 29:21).

We are told by Daniel that the **צפיר** (*tsephir*) - “he-goat” has horns, and it is possible that those that “came from the west” may have belonged to a species of antelopes that had particularly large horns, fit for making a **שופר** (*shophar*). We should also notice that **שופר** (*shophar*) may be a **צ** (ts) - **ש** (sh) sibilant- letter exchange variant of **צופר** (*tsophar*), a word from the same root as **צפיר** (*tsephir*) - “he-goat.”

In the Book of Jeremiah we read:

**מעי מעי אחולה (אחילה) קירות לבי המה-לי לבי--לא אחרש: כי קול שופר שמעתי (שמעת) נפשי, תרועת מלחמה.**

**שבר על-שבר נקרא, כי שדדה כל-הארץ; פתאם שדדו אהלי, רגע יריעתי. עד-מתי אראה-נס--אשמעה קול שופר.**

“My bowels my bowels! I writhe in pain! The chambers of my heart! My heart moans within me! I cannot hold my peace! Because did you hear my soul, the sound of the horn, the alarm of war.

**Destruction follows upon destruction, for the whole land is spoiled; suddenly are my tents spoiled, my curtains in a moment.**

**How long shall I see the standard, shall I hear the sound of the horn?”** (Jer 4:19-21; see also: Jer 42:14).

Clearly, the sound of the horn was an alert about an approaching calamity.

Now in the Book of Ezekiel we read:

**באה הצפירה אליך יושב הארץ; בא העת, קרוב היום מהומה--ולא-הד הרים.**

**“The turn is come to you, inhabitant of the land; the time is come, the day of tumult is near, and not an echo of mountains” (Eze 7:7).**

It is not clear how the English translator determined that here **צפירה** (*tsephirah*) means “turn” and this understanding is not supported by the Greek translator. However, the comparison between these verses suggests that **צפירה** (*tsephirah*) is the same as **שפירה** (*shephirah*) - “the sound of the **שופר** (*shophar*) - “the horn” warning of an approaching catastrophe.