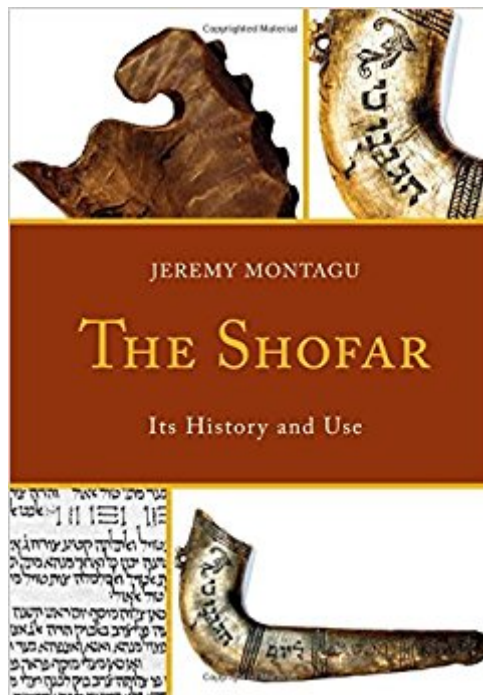


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The Shofar: Its History And Use



Synopsis

In *The Shofar*, Jeremy Montagu offers a detailed study of the ram's horn of the Bible, describing its history and use—both ritual and secular—from biblical times to the present. Because the same person normally blows the shofar each year during the Jewish High Holy Days, few are aware of the wide differences among communities around the world: the varying points in the Jewish liturgical service when the shofar is blown, what sound combinations exist, and the many varieties of the instrument. This is the first work of its kind to detail the full range of historical, musical, antiquarian, and religious issues surrounding the ancient instrument with all relevant citations from the Bible, the Talmud, and key post-Talmudic sources. Jeremy Montagu carefully examines horn types, sound characteristics, liturgical uses, and community functions to illustrate how the shofar has reflected local custom, regional needs, and religious practice. Chapters provide difficult-to-find information on how shofars are made; advice on how to choose, prepare, and maintain shofars; and instructions for aspiring blowers on a variety of traditions. With more than sixty photographs from the author's personal collection, this is an ideal work for Jews and Christians, religious scholars and musicologists, and even practicing musicians seeking to understand the crucial role of this instrument in the life of a people. As of November 2015, a new printing of this book will include a general index. A PDF version of the general index is available to previous purchasers of the volume. Please contact Rowman & Littlefield's music editor for assistance.

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Customer Reviews

A distinguished scholar of musical instruments, Montagu combines, in his inimitable way, minutely researched scholarship with personal anecdotes and humor. Only he could have written this volume on the shofar, the ancient instrument used in Jewish religious practices. Drawing on his own collection of musical instruments, his experience as a blower of the shofar, and his deep knowledge of Jewish thought, Montagu presents a typology of 16 varieties of shofar, plus instructions on how to choose one, how to make one, how to play it, and who may play it. The most important use of the shofar is for Rosh Hashanah—when it is not a musical instrument [but] instead, a voice, a call from heaven—but Montagu includes a chapter on its secular use, noting its survival as the oldest musical instrument in written history that is still in use. More than 30 instruments are described, their inscriptions cataloged, the theological sources plumbed deeply. This little book will become the book on the shofar. And praise is due the publisher for laminating the would-be dust jacket to the covers, thus preserving the photos that would have otherwise been lost in shelving the book in a library. All books should be published this way. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates through faculty and professionals; general readers. (CHOICE)

The Shofar by Jeremy Montagu is a scholarly yet accessible read on the laws, traditions and development of the shofar as we know it today, by someone who has been a shofar blower since the early 1960s. . . . This is the first book to detail the full range of historical, musical, antiquarian and religious issues for the oldest continuously-used musical instrument in the world. It includes more than 60 photographs from his personal collection of shofars from around the world. The book also details secular uses for the shofar, and who can blow the shofar and why. (Southern Jewish Life Magazine)

Scholarly expertise blends with practical experience and a fierce affection to produce what is likely to be the authoritative book on the shofar for years to come. [T]he author writes from within the Jewish tradition and says so explicitly and proudly. The laws of the shofar's manufacture and use are clearly set out. There is also an invaluable list of sources, biblical and rabbinical, in which the shofar is mentioned, including the relevant quotation in full. For the aspiring shofar blower, there are lots of useful tips to make sure your horn is heard on high. The author's wide knowledge of music is continuously brought to bear, with occasionally luminous results. Add to this expertise Montagu's easy conversational prose style, remarkable in any work, let alone one intended for the reference shelf, and you have the ideal gift for the holiday season, as well as a source of knowledge of lasting value. (The Jerusalem Report)

Jeremy Montagu is former curator of the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments and lecturer at the University of Oxford. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London and of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and an Emeritus Fellow of Wadham College, University of Oxford. He is also the president of the Galpin Society, the premier international society for the study of musical instruments. He is the author of a variety of books on musical instruments, including Musical Instruments of the Bible (Scarecrow Press, 2001), Origins and Development of Musical Instruments (Scarecrow Press, 2007), and Horns and Trumpets of the World (Rowman and Littlefield, 2014). A resident of Oxford, England, he has blown the shofar in synagogues since the early 1960s and is a regular worshipper in the synagogue there.

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