

Numbers 10:10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/num/num-10/numbers-101-10/>

The final preparation for leaving Sinai was to institute the blowing of two silver trumpets. They were to be used to gather the people together and to signal the time for the Israelites to begin the next step of their journey and when to prepare for war.

The familiar phrase *the Lord spoke further to Moses, saying* (v. 1) introduced another topic that needed to be discussed before the Israelites' departure from Sinai. Here, the LORD commanded Moses to *make yourself two trumpets of silver* (v. 2). These "trumpets" were not the same as the "shofar," which was made from a ram's horn.

The LORD told them *of hammered work you shall make them*. The word "hammered" (Heb. "miqsheh") is used in Exodus 25:17 and 31 to describe the construction of the cherubim, which were fashioned out of gold. These silver trumpets were to be made with the same sort of fine craftsmanship.

The trumpets were to be used for

- *Summoning the congregation*. The occasions for this would be to go to war or to signal the celebration of the feasts.
- *Having the camps set out*. The LORD would signal that it was time to leave the camp (through lifting the cloud from the tabernacle—see Numbers 9:15 – 23). Sounding the trumpets would then be a response to the LORD's command and signal that it was time to depart.

The first scenario of summoning the congregation was *when both are blown* (v. 3). This was the signal that *all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the doorway of the tent of meeting*. When Moses called for both trumpets to sound, all of the male Israelites were to meet with him at the door of the tabernacle. *But if only one is blown, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall assemble before you* (v. 4). When just one trumpet is sounded, only the "leaders" (Heb. "nasi'im," "lifted up") were to respond and go to the tabernacle door to meet with Moses. But if both trumpets blew, then all males were to muster. ([See layout of the Israelite camps](#))

The next scenario describes what was to happen *when you blow an alarm* (v. 5). The word "alarm" (Heb. "teru'ah") can mean either to "blast a trumpet" a certain way or "give a shout." Sometimes, this word is used to signal an imminent battle. Apparently, the "alarm" was a certain sound or series of notes made by the trumpets.

When the first "alarm" was sounded, *the camps that are pitched on the east side shall set out*. This means that the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun (Numbers 2:3 – 9) were to begin their march. And *when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are pitched on the south*

side shall set out (v. 6). These “camps” included the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad (Numbers 2:10 – 15). Thus, *an alarm is to be blown for them to set out* using the trumpets.

The LORD then warned Moses that *when convening the assembly, however, you shall blow without sounding an alarm* (v. 7). So, there was a different sound to be used to gather the people before the tabernacle as opposed to the trumpet sound to gather them for war. This might be similar to the bugle calls used in modern times.

Not just anyone could sound the trumpets. Only *the priestly sons of Aaron, moreover, shall blow the trumpets* (v. 8). And this was not legislation that was to be in effect only during the journey to the Promised Land. Instead, *this shall be for you a perpetual statute throughout your generations*. These trumpets were to be used when they settled in the Promised Land as well.

The LORD commanded Moses that *when you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets* (v. 9). The phrase “in the land” refers to the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. The LORD knew that there were going to be threats against His people when they lived in the land. In giving this command, the LORD is beginning to prepare His people to face battle. God chose the path out of Egypt in order to allow the people time to gain the courage and ability to fight (Exodus 13:17). Courage to walk in obedience in the face of obstacles is something God highly values, and highly rewards (Matthew 10:28-31).

So when a threat arose, they were to sound the trumpets and go to war. Doing what the LORD commanded guaranteed that His people *may be remembered before the Lord your God*. For the LORD to *remember* His people meant that He would act on their behalf and thus Israel would *be saved from their enemies*. When we see *saved* in scripture we should ask “Who or what is being delivered from who or what?” From the context, being “saved” here has the idea of being preserved or rescued from physical danger.

In contrast to the time of war, the command was given to sound the trumpets on other occasions. Specifically, they were also to be blasted to signal the times of celebrations, such as:

- *The day of your gladness* (v. 10). This could refer to any time when the LORD bestowed a blessing upon an individual or the people as a whole.
- *In your appointed feasts*. These would be all of the major feasts that were prescribed in Exodus and Leviticus, including Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Harvest (Exodus 23:15 – 16).
- *On the first days of your months*. This is the first reference to a celebration that was to take place at the first of each month. Since the appearance of the new moon occurred on the first of the month, this could refer to a celebration of the New Moon (1 Chronicles 23:31; Isaiah 1:13).

Moreover, they were told to sound the trumpets

- *Over your burnt offerings*
- *Over the sacrifices of your peace offerings*

We might imagine that signals were created for each of these purposes, perhaps a number or cadence of blasts for each. The point of all this was to be *a reminder of you before your God*. The Hebrew word for *reminder* (“zikron”) is similar to the word “remembered” (niphil form of “zakar”) in verse 11. In other words, the use of the trumpets would be a memorial, a “reminder” to the people when they were before the LORD that He was their source of guidance and blessing.

The LORD ends this section with the familiar declaration—*I am the Lord your God*. This phrase emphasized the seriousness of these instructions to His people. It was also part of the reminder, because this phrase is used to remind the people that He was their provider and Deliverer from Egypt (Exodus 20:2) and as such worthy of their obedience (Leviticus 18:2 – 4).

For the New Testament Church, trumpets are also significant because they will sound at the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). This too will be a time of celebration and worship of the LORD because of His mighty works. During the Great Tribulation, trumpets will be sounded by angels during a series of seven judgments upon the earth (Revelation 18).

Biblical Text

¹ The Lord spoke further to Moses, saying, ² “Make yourself two trumpets of silver, of hammered work you shall make them; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for having the camps set out. ³ When both are blown, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ⁴ Yet if *only* one is blown, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall assemble before you. ⁵ But when you blow an alarm, the camps that are pitched on the east side shall set out. ⁶ When you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are pitched on the south side shall set out; an alarm is to be blown for them to set out. ⁷ When convening the assembly, however, you shall blow without sounding an alarm. ⁸ The priestly sons of Aaron, moreover, shall blow the trumpets; and this shall be for you a perpetual statute throughout your generations. ⁹ When you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God, and be saved from your enemies. ¹⁰ Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed feasts, and on the first *days* of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder of you before your God. I am the Lord your God.”