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2nd Day: 7:36pm

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SOUND OF SHABBAT: THE SHOFAR'S SILENT SYMPHONY

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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Though the Mitzvah of blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is rooted in the Torah's commandment, it also serves another important purpose. The shofar functions as a compelling wake-up call for Jews during this solemn period. Its piercing sound, often likened to a cry, is designed to rouse our souls to engage in self-examination and repentance. It serves as a reminder to evaluate our actions, seek forgiveness for our shortcomings, and aspire to personal growth in the upcoming year.

The Gemara provides an additional insight into the significance of shofar blowing. It explains that when Hashem hears the sound of the shofar, He is reminded of the binding of Yitzchak Avinu, where a ram was offered in his place as a sacrifice. At that moment, Hashem, with His boundless mercy, refrains from harsh judgment (מידת הדין) and instead judges with mercy and compassion (מידת הרחמים).

For these reasons, the shofar holds such profound significance that the Gemara asserts (ראש השנה טז, ב) that a year without its sounding may turn out unfavorably. However, when Rosh Hashanah coincides with Shabbat, a dilemma arises because our rabbis restricted shofar blowing on Shabbat to prevent it from being carried into the street, which would violate the prohibition against carrying on Shabbat.

The Sefer Meshech Chochma (פרשת אמור ד"ה) elucidates that blowing the shofar functions as a remedy during the heavenly trial. Just as a sick person requires medicine for recovery, and even if they can't take it through no fault of their own, they won't heal, similarly, on Rosh Hashanah, if we don't blow the shofar due to circumstances like Shabbat, despite it being beyond our control, we might miss the beneficial support it offers for a good year.

The Meshech Chochma offers a fascinating perspective: he says that the decision not to blow the shofar on Shabbat is actually a profound sacrifice that benefits the nation. It symbolizes our dedica-

tion to preserving the sanctity of Shabbat and preventing inadvertent violations. This action sends a powerful message to Hashem, demonstrating our willingness to endure a challenging year to protect Shabbat and uphold His commandments. When Hashem perceives this commitment, it likely contributes to a favorable judgment for the Jewish nation.

However, the Ben Ish Chai (תורה לשמה סימן תלו) raises some perplexing inquiries. He questions how Chazal could annul the shofar blowing on Shabbat, seemingly contradicting the Torah's commandment, just to prevent any potential carrying on Shabbat. After all, doesn't Jewish law generally prioritize the fulfillment of a positive Mitzvah over avoiding a negative one? In this case, the act of blowing the shofar constitutes a positive commandment, which should logically take precedence over the prohibition against carrying, especially when the concern revolves around the mere possibility of someone carrying it.

Furthermore, the Ben Ish Chai questions why Chazal chose to nullify this Mitzvah due to a doubtful concern of Shabbat violation. Doesn't the principle in Jewish law favor certainty over doubts? In other words, shouldn't the observance of a certain Mitzvah take precedence over concerns that are based on uncertainty or doubt, such as the potential violation of Shabbat?

The Ben Ish Chai then introduces a significant principle. He suggests that Chazal provided the explanation of the fear of carrying on Shabbat as a surface-level justification for not blowing the shofar, while a deeper and more profound rationale exists. This deeper reason has its roots in Kabbalah. According to this Kabbalistic perspective, the achievements and spiritual elevation that the shofar brings about are already accomplished on Shabbat through the inherent sanctity of the day itself. As such, Shabbat is so spiritually elevated that it doesn't require the shofar to achieve the same effects.



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Since this reason is rooted in Kabbalah, which may not be comprehensible to many, a secondary explanation is offered to provide a more accessible rationale for the practice, ensuring that people do not perceive Chazal's restriction as arbitrary.

Let's reflect on the intriguing insights of the Ben Ish Chai. Shabbat achieves what the shofar accomplishes on Rosh

Hashanah. We eagerly anticipate the shofar's sound, hoping to be remembered favorably by Hashem, who recalls the sacrifice of Yitzchak. However, we experience a parallel opportunity each and every Shabbat throughout the year.

On this Shabbat-Rosh Hashanah, let us contemplate the significance of Shabbat and carry that message throughout the entire year's Shabbats.

UNVEILING THE UNSUNG: ROSH HASHANAH'S HIDDEN HARMONIES

Discovering the profound meaning behind the silence of Rosh Hashanah prayers and the concealed spiritual harmonies within.

Rosh Hashanah prayer differs from other holiday prayers in several significant ways. One notable distinction is the omission of the "Hallel" prayer, which is recited during most other Jewish holidays. This unique aspect of Rosh Hashanah prayer is rooted in a profound reason.

According to the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 32b), the heavenly angels, the "Malachei Hasharet," approached Hashem with a question during Rosh Hashanah: "Why is it that the people of Yisrael are not singing songs of praise like they do on other holidays?" In response, Hashem sent a powerful message: "How can they sing songs of joy when the Books of Life and Death are open before Me, and I am in the process of inscribing the fate of each person?"

We are familiar with the concept that the main task of the malachim is to sing daily to Hashem. If one pays close attention to the question posed by the malachim, one will notice that the angels didn't inquire about why songs, which would include them as well, are not being said. Instead, they specifically asked why the *nation* is not singing. This implies that the angels are indeed still singing to Hashem.

This observation of the angels' participation in song is illuminated by the Tosafot (Erchin 10b), who further support the idea that the angels join in harmony with what we recite during the Rosh Hashanah prayer: וְהַחַיִּים יְשׁוּרֵן, וְכְרוּבִים יִפְאֲרוּ. In English: "And the angels will sing, and the cherubim will glorify."

The insight above raises a compelling question. The Gemara states that for the angels to sing, they must wait for Am Yisrael to sing first. Without that, the angels cannot commence their song. This seems to present an apparent contradiction to an earlier point made by Tosafot, which stated that while the Jewish nation does not recite Hallel on Rosh Hashanah, the malachim do.

The resolution to this apparent contradiction lies in understanding the context and purpose behind these statements.

First, let's clarify the purpose of singing to Hashem. While it is indeed a means of praising Hashem, these songs achieve much more. Rav Chaim Volozhin explains that these songs serve to elevate the spiritual realms, and through this elevation, we in the physical world receive the necessary blessings for our livelihood.

Regarding the angels, Rav Chaim Volozhin says that the reason they don't sing independently is because they lack the

capacity to elevate and establish connections within the spiritual realms. It is solely the Jewish people who possess this unique ability, and it is only after we initiate our songs that the angels gain the capability to achieve their purpose through their own melodies.

Now, we can comprehend the question raised earlier. The angels do indeed sing on Rosh Hashanah, as Tosafot explained, but their songs, while being a part of the celestial chorus, are considered ineffective as they don't have any impact or influence on the spiritual realms.

This is precisely why the angels inquire of Hashem about these songs because the absence of Am Yisrael's singing directly affects the efficacy of their own songs.

Yet, it prompts us to explore why the angels would engage in singing on Rosh Hashanah at all if their songs are deemed as having no practical effect.

Additionally, why is it specifically the "Malachei Hasharet" who inquire about this matter and not other angels who also participate in the singing? The answer lies in the role of these angels, as the "Malachei Hasharet" are the angels whose role is to assist and support the people of Am Yisrael. They sing during Rosh Hashanah to convey a crucial message while Hashem judges the world. Their message while singing is to demonstrate how their songs lack meaning and purpose without the presence of Am Yisrael. Furthermore, it underscores the notion that the entire world lacks its true purpose and fulfillment without the presence and vitality of the people of Am Yisrael. Therefore, they continually beseech Hashem to grant Am Yisrael life and continuity, as it is through Am Yisrael that the world receives the Divine abundance it needs to thrive and be inspired. This recurring inquiry serves as a powerful annual reminder of this profound truth.

We can also elucidate why the people of Am Yisrael refrain from singing. It's not solely driven by fear; instead, Hashem desires them to deliberately refrain from singing. This abstinence is intended to convey to Hashem that in their absence, no one else could effectively fulfill their role of elevating the spiritual realms through song.

This understanding provides insight into Hashem's response: The nation refrains from singing because the Books of Life and Death are open, and their intention is to emphasize this point. By doing so, they hope to be inscribed in the Book of Life and ensure their continued existence and ability to fulfill their sacred mission.



WHEN KINDNESS MEETS ACCOUNTABILITY: TOMER DEVORAH PART 2

Last week, we introduced the 'Sefer Tomer Devorah' by the esteemed Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, which delves into the 13 Attributes of HaShem. It emphasizes that we are beseeched to emulate the Divine ways and conduct ourselves accordingly. When one follows HaShem's path in dealing with those who have wronged him or acted improperly, he ascends to a "holier" state of being. He no longer gets bogged down by minor offenses, such as insults or misspoken words. Instead, he interacts with others as Hashem does – rising above negativity and expressing a higher self. Last week, we explored Rabbi Cordovero's first of the 13 Attributes of Hashem: 'Who is a G-d like You?' This attribute reflects Hashem as a humble King Who endures humanity's insults as He witnesses their transgressions yet continues to provide them with the energy and power to persist in their ways.

Today, we will delve further into understanding the second Attribute of Hashem and explore how we can emulate His ways.

The second attribute, "Who bears iniquity," נושא עון

Rabbi Cordovero says that the second Attribute surpasses the previous one. When a person commits a wrongdoing, they inadvertently create a destructive spirit קטיגור. Just as it's said, "One who transgresses a single iniquity acquires a single prosecutor." This prosecutor then stands before Hashem, declaring, "the sinner made me." Because every being in the world derives its existence from the Divine flow, including those destructive spirits, logically, one might expect Hashem to say, "I won't nourish destructive spirits; they should turn to their creators (the sinner) for sustenance." The destructive spirit would then take its toll on the sinner and hurt or possibly kill him. However, Hashem does not do this; instead, He bears and tolerates the iniquity. He sustains it just as He sustains the entire world.

Hence, there must be three potential outcomes when one

commits a sin: either the sinner repents and eliminates the destructive spirit through self-correction, another option is Hashem nullifies it through afflictions and death, or the sinner faces retribution in Gehinom.



To illustrate this concept more clearly, let's imagine a scenario. Suppose we extend our kindness to someone by letting them stay in our house until they can get back on their feet. However, this individual makes poor decisions and, in the middle of the night, takes our car keys and goes for a joyride. Unfortunately, they get into an accident involving a mafia member. As they deal with the consequences, the mafia imposes not only damages, but also monthly "protection fees," threatening severe consequences if the payments aren't made. Knowing that he doesn't have the money to meet these demands, he turns to us for help with the payment.

Typically, in such a situation, one might feel betrayed and say, "I helped you, and you betrayed my trust." However, instead of chastising him, we decide to cover his payments every month to keep him out of trouble. Now, imagine that while we continue doing this, he repeats the offense, stealing the car once more and causing another crash with similar consequences. At this point, it becomes clear that he must face the consequences of his actions.

When we talk about Hashem, it's important to understand that every time we sin, we inadvertently create negative spiritual forces. These forces either draw from our life force, taking a portion from it or potentially all of it, or Hashem sustains them. Despite our repeated shortcomings on a daily basis, Hashem consistently provides us with protection.

The reason for this unwavering support is that Hashem patiently waits for us to recognize our faults, improve our ways, and return to Him.

NAVIGATING COMMON MISTAKES IN SHOFAR BLOWING:

Since the blowing of the shofar is the central mitzvah of the day and serves as our advocate on Rosh Hashanah, it is imperative to ensure it is performed correctly; otherwise, it becomes invalid. Let's review some essential points that are common sources of errors that every baal tokeah (shofar blower) should be aware of.

- The sequence of blowing sounds is divided into three parts:
 - First, there is t'kiyah-sh'varim-t'kiyah, often abbreviated as tashat.
 - Second, there is t'kiyah-t'ruah-t'kiyah, often abbreviated as tarat.
 - Third, there is t'kiyah-sh'varim-t'ruah-t'kiyah, often referred to as tashrat.

The length requirement for the t'kiyah should be at least as long as it takes to blow the middle sounds.

Since the third set of sounds (tashrat) consists of sh'varim and t'ruah, it is essential to ensure that when blowing the t'kiyah (the first and last blowing of that set), it should be at

least double in length. (שלחן ערוך סימן תקצ סעיף ג' משנה ברורה סימן תקצ ס"ק טו.)

Accordingly, if the baal tokeah inadvertently blew more sounds of t'ruah, the t'kiyah should be longer to match that extra length. (שפת אמת ר"ה לגב). Certainly, in a situation of Bedieved one can fulfill the requirement of t'kiyah with a sound that is at least as long as the minimum sound of t'ruah. (שער הציון ג').

- The number of t'ruah blows holds significant importance in the shofar service. Hence, a minimum of nine sounds must be blown. Regrettably, there are

occasions when the baal tokeah produces fewer than nine sounds, leading to the t'ruah being declared invalid. Therefore, it is vital to exercise vigilant attention to guarantee the complete set of nine sounds is appropriately executed.

- Breathing while blowing the shofar plays a crucial role, as improper timing can render the mitzvah invalid. When one blows sh'varim, it is essential not to inhale in between, as doing so would invalidate the sequence. However, there is a machloket (difference of opinion) regarding whether it is permissible to breathe while blowing tashrat, specifically be-



NAVIGATING COMMON MISTAKES IN SHOFAR BLOWING:

tween the sh'varim and t'ruah.

In light of this uncertainty, the Shulchan Aruch (סימן תקצ"ד) instructs practitioners to accommodate both opinions. During the first set, typically performed while the congregation is seated, one should refrain from breathing in between. In contrast, during the second set, it is recommended to take a breath between the sh'varim and t'ruah. This ruling aligns with the practice of Sephardim and the majority of Ashkenazim (Shaar Atsiun 18 and Shulchan Aruch Arav 9). However, it is worth noting that some Ashkenazic (Rema) communities opt to incorporate breathing in between during all sets.

d. Another requirement pertains to the congregation members who are listening to the shofar blowing. Halacha dictates

(Shaar Hatsuin 23) that individuals must be aware of which sound belongs to which set to fulfill their obligation properly. Some poskim advise that each person in the congregation should have the intention in their heart and rely on the baal tokeah to perform the correct sequences (Dirshu 17).

e. The Shulchan Aruch Harav (סעיף ז') underscores the importance of uniformity when producing the three sounds known as sh'varim. It is crucial to ensure that all three sh'varim sounds about the same length, avoiding any discrepancy where one sound is equivalent to the duration of two short sounds and the other matches the duration of three short sounds.

דברים שנוהגים לאכול בראש השנה.

העירו כמה פוסקים להימנע מדבש ולטבול בסוכר (רב חיים פלאג' במועד לכל חי סימן יב). והבן איש חי (פרשת נצבים אות ד') כתב לאכול תפוח מבושל בסוכר, אכן ישנם קהילות של ספרדים שנהגו לטבול בדבש.

ולעומת זאת כתבו הפוסקים להימנע מאכילת מאכלים חמוצים כגון תבשילים חמוצים ופירות חמוצים וכן לא יאכלו פירות שלא נגמר בישולם (בן איש חי פרשת נצבים אות ה'). יש מדקדקים שלא לאכול אגוזים מכיון שאגוז עולה לגמטריא 'חטא' בלא האל"ף, וכן הם מרבים ליחה.

כמו כן יש חילוק באכילת דגים בראש השנה כיון שדג מזכיר לשון דאגה ולכן יש שנמנעו מלאכלו, בעוד שיש מנהגים שהקפידו להביא על מנת לומר עליו את היה רצון שפירה ונרבה כדגים (חזו"ע ימים נוראים עמוד ק).

ועל פי הקבלה יש להימנע מלאכול ב"ר ענבים שחורים וגם לא להעלותם על השלחן, אבל ענבים לבנים הם סימן טוב (כף החיים סימן תקפג סכ"א). ומי שאינו יכול לאכול מאכלים אלו מחמת שהם מזיקים לו או שאינו רוצה לאוכלם משום איזו סיבה או שאינם לגמרי נקיים מתולעים, אינו חייב לאוכלם ודי לראותם ולומר את היה רצון.

וזהו מאד האור לציון (ח"ד עמוד לו) שבזמן אכילת הסימנים לא יעשו ליצנות וקלות ראש מהענין אלא יאמרו הכל בכבוד ראש ובכוונה. וכבר הזהירו הפוסקים להימנע מאד מהכעס ביום ראש השנה שהכעס ביום זה הוא סימן רע.

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