

HALOCHOSCOPE



[reference omitted from last issue section C: Chochmas Adam 106:21.]

This week's question:

There are two *shofaros* available. One is a ram's horn. The other is from a different animal but has a better sound. Is there a preference? Could both be used, one of them for the first series together with the *brochos*, and the other during *musaf*? If so, is there a preference which should be used for each of these series?

The issues:

- A) *Shofar on Rosh Hashanah*
- B) The type of horn that qualifies
- C) *Hidur mitzvah*, beautifying a *mitzvah*

A) *Shofar on Rosh Hashanah*

On *Rosh Hashana* there is a Scriptural *mitzvah* to hear the sound of the *shofar*, a ram's horn. Scripturally, the *kolos*, sounds of the *shofar* are meant to be heard in sets. Each set consists of a *tekia*, long blast, a *teruah*, a series of short blasts, and a final *tekia*. Three such sets are required, totaling nine *kolos*. In practice, the Talmud debates the nature of *teruah*. In one view it consists of three wails, called *shevarim*, or broken sounds. In the other view it is a series of nine sobs. A third possibility is that it consists of both, first the wails and then the sobs. To satisfy all possibilities, one must hear three sets of each. The total would be thirty sounds.

Based on various *pesukim*, the Rabbis instituted *kolos* to be blown during the *musaf* '*shemone esrai*'. When formal *tefilos* were instituted, the services for *musaf* on *Rosh Hashana* were made longer than the regular *Yomtov* service. The standard middle *brocha* of *kidush hayom* is expanded to include *malchiyos*, declaring Hashem King, and *brochos* are added for *zichronos*, bringing our 'memories/mention' before Hashem, and *shofaros*, a series of allusions to the significance of the *shofar*. After each of these, the *shofar* is sounded. Our practice is to sound one set of each of the variations. By the end of this, a second thirty *kolos* are sounded. The first thirty, sounded before *shemone esrai*, are called *tekios dimeyushav*, or sounds when seated. Since people are not standing *davening shemone esrai*, theoretically, they could be seated for these. The second series is called *tekios dimeumad*, sounded when standing. In practice, unless one is incapacitated, one must stand for all of the *tekios* and the *brochos*, as for most other *mitzvos*.

The Talmud relates, a sage told his disciple to blow the *shofar* for him when he would signal that he had finished a *brocha*. Another sage pointed out that the *shofar* is only sounded at the conclusion of *brochos* in a *shemone esrai* recited with a *tzibur*, quorum of ten men. Does this mean that in a *tzibur* one should indeed hear the *kolos* after concluding the *brochos* in the quiet *shemone esrai*? Or did the first sage want to hear it

during his quiet *shemone esrai* only because he had no *tzibur* and *chazaras hashatz*, repetition of the *chazan*? In a *tzibur*, he would have heard them sounded during *chazaras hashatz*. Reasons are given why the *tekios dimeumad* should or should not be sounded during the silent *shemone esrai*. Accordingly, there are two *minhagim*. Some sound them during the silent *shemone esrai*. They repeat this during the repetition, with an additional ten at the end of the repetition. Thus, a total of one hundred are sounded altogether. Others do not sound any during the silent *shemone esrai*. Rather, the main fulfillment of the Rabbis' institution is during the repetition. They add thirty more at the end of *davening* to total one hundred. [This number corresponds to the number of sounds made by the mother of *Sisera*, waiting for her son to come home from battle. It is from the terminology used by the *Navi* for this, that we derive the meaning of *yevava*, another term for *teruah*.]

The Rabbis need not have instituted extra *kolos*. They could have required the existing thirty to be blown during *shemone esrai*. Some maintain that this was the intent. They positioned the main *kolos* in *shemone esrai*. The earlier *kolos* are additional. In one view, they originally did not require the earlier *kolos*, but that they were added later.

According to some, the *brocha* we recite nowadays was not part of the original institution. The *shemone esrai* is considered a *brocha* on the *mitzvah*. Others maintain that the *brocha* was always included in the institution. If necessary, it could have been ordained to be recited right before, or even during *shemone esrai*. This way it would precede the *tekios dimeumad*, even though it would not be immediate. In practice, now that we sound the *tekios dimeyushav*, the *brocha* precedes them. In light of all this, the *tekios dimeumad* should really be considered the main *kolos*, since they fulfill both Scriptural and Rabbinical requirements. However, since one has already heard the *tekios dimeyushav*, he has satisfied the Scriptural obligation. The *brocha* before the first *tekios* is valid for both sets.

Another gain from sounding the *shofar* twice is to confuse the *Satan*, prosecuting angel, catching him off guard. Another view is that the Talmud's reference of *tekios dimeyushav* actually refers to *tekios* blown during *chazaras hashatz*. At that time only the *shatz* is truly required to stand. The *tekios dimeumad* refer to thirty blown at the end of *davening*, to really confuse the *Satan*. [This is also a reason for the very long *tekia* at the end.] According to this view, the thirty sounded before *musaf* are a more recent institution, to reach the one hundred total.

Accordingly, in the event that one has to choose which of the series to consider the more important one, it is unclear whether the first series with its *brochos* takes precedence. Although the *brochos* are indeed recited then, the second series might be the main original *mitzvah*. Ultimately, we blow the first *tekios* first, and with the *brochos*. Therefore, it would be more logical to show them preference with the better *shofar*. Furthermore, some people do not get to hear the second series. On the other hand, if the main *tekios* are the *tekios dimeumad*, it is the first series that confuses the *Satan*. Some maintain that the association with the ram is what confuses him. If so, maybe the first *tekios* should be blown with a ram's horn regardless of the quality! Perhaps both options are equally good. This is the approach regarding how to blow the middle *kolos*. We follow one view for the *tekios dimeyushav* and the other for the *tekios dimeumad*. [See Rosh Hashana 16a-b 32a-b 33b-34a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 590-592 596, commentaries.]

B) The types of horn

The Torah mentions blowing blasts on *Rosh Hashanah*, but does not say which type of horn should be used. By comparing this *mitzvah* to other *mitzvos*, we learn that one may not use *chatzotzros*, trumpets, that are made of silver. Rather, we use a *shofar*, that is made from the horn of an animal. In *Tehilim*, there is a reference to *Rosh Hashanah* as the *Yomtov* that falls on *Rosh Chodesh*, when we blow a *shofar*. All animal horns are called *shofar*, except for those from cows and bulls. These are never called *shofar*, but are always called *keren*. The Talmud debates this. One view maintains that there is a Scriptural source to call the horn of a bull a *shofar* as well. The other view maintains that there is a different way to interpret that source. Various additional explanations are given on why bovine horns are excluded. The horn of a bovine would serve as a reminder of the shameful sin of the golden calf. Bovines grow a new layer of horn each year. Their horns would then have the appearance of multiple *shofaros*. When the Torah does mention it, the singular *shofar* is used.

Accordingly, any horn other than a bovine horn qualifies for *Rosh Hashanah*, for *Yom Kippur* [of *Yovel*], and for public fast days. This includes those of the various sheep, goat and antelope families. The Talmud then debates which is the preferred type of horn for *Rosh Hashanah*, that of a ram, or that of a *yael*. The poskim debate the *yael*. Some say it refers to a female sheep (ewe) as opposed to a ram. Others maintain that it is a separate species. From *Targumin* in *Tanach* it appears that it is the same as the *ako* mentioned in the Torah (this week's *parsha*). This is a type of wild goat, which some translate as the ibex. We follow the view that on *Rosh Hashanah* the preferred type of horn is that of a ram. The Torah also uses the word *yovel*, which is known to mean the horn of a ram. An additional reason to use a ram's horn is mentioned by the Talmud, although this is not offered as an actual reason for the *mitzvah*. It serves as an additional symbolism. The ram commemorates the story of the *akeida*, where a ram was offered in place of Yitzchok. The ram actually represents Yitzchok himself. It is as though Yitzchok was the *korban*, and as though we offered ourselves.

The poskim, however, hold varying views. In one view, only a ram's horn may be used. His view is difficult to reconcile with the Talmudic discussion. In another view, only horns from sheep and domestic or wild goat species qualify. Other horns are considered the same as that of a bull. The main difference is that the kosher horns are in two parts, the inner bony part and the outer shell, that are fused together, but can be peeled apart. The invalid horns are one solid piece. Horns of non-kosher animals are invalid.

The Talmud debates whether the horn should be straight or curved. Straightness symbolizes clarity of the mind. Curved symbolizes bowing in submission. We follow the view that on *Rosh Hashanah*, when *tefilah* is main focus, bowing in submission is more important. In practice, the most ideal is a ram's horn that is curved. However, any of the other horns mentioned are acceptable. Ideally, the *shofar* should be curved, but a straight *shofar* is acceptable as well. Given a choice between a curved goat horn or a straight ram horn, there seems to be a consensus that the curved horn is preferred.

The Talmud rules that all *shofar* sounds are acceptable. These include thick, thin, high or low, and even a *shofar* that cannot produce a smooth sound, but that changes in

the middle. As long as there is no actual break in the sound, it is valid. The terminology used by the Talmud implies that these sounds are kosher, but not necessarily ideal. Nonetheless, the poskim do not differentiate between them. However, they maintain that a steady smooth sound is definitely preferred. [See Rosh Hashanah 16a 26a-27b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 586:1 6 Rema etc., commentaries.]

C) *Hidur mitzvah*

The poskim say that the preference for a curved *shofar* is a Rabbinical institution, while the preference for a ram *shofar* is a *minhag*, ancient practice. Nonetheless, one should spend the customary extra to buy a ram *shofar* as *hidur mitzvah*. In addition, there is the minority view that only a ram *shofar* is kosher. The Talmud derives the principle of *hidur mitzvah*, beautifying a *mitzvah*, from the verse: *zeh Kaili veanvaihu*, in this context, “This is my G-d and I shall beautify Him.” The poskim debate whether this means that it is a Scriptural obligation, or a Rabbinically instituted concept. Generally, Scriptural concepts are absolute. They are not given to subjectivity or relativity. In addition, the entire concept of *hidur mitzvah* indicates that it is not even a necessary part of the *mitzvah*, but enhances it. On the other hand, there are some instances where the Talmud makes it very clear that the lack of *hidur* invalidates the *mitzvah*. Some say that the basic principle is Scriptural, but that the Rabbis have the authority to determine in which cases it is indeed essential and in which cases it is an added enhancement.

The main applications of *hidur* are to articles used to perform *mitzvos*. Thus, the Talmud lists examples, including *shofar na'eh*, a nice *shofar*. Generally, this would mean that one should make or buy a nice-looking *shofar*. The idea is that usually it takes more work or costs a little more. One should go above and beyond the minimum to make it beautiful. The Talmud says that one should spend up to a third more. [Some say this means, or also means that one should be willing to pay more for a larger item.] The Talmud debates whether the third is calculated by the total cost of the more beautiful item, or a third of the plain item added to its cost.

Apart from looks, a better item can produce a more beautiful *mitzvah*. For example, a finer quill will write a better *sefer Torah*. In our case, the *shofar* with the finer sound is more beautiful. Our specific question is whether the beauty of the sound, which is a clear example of *hidur*, is as important as the advantage of using the *shofar* of a ram. If the sound of the ram *shofar* is not pleasant, it would seem preferable to use the pleasant sounding *shofar*. Furthermore, if the ram *shofar* does not produce a loud enough sound, the other *shofar* is preferred. Some say that a *shofar* that is so faint that it cannot produce a sound that is audible at some distance is invalid. [See Shabbos 133b Baba Kama 9a-b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar 586:1 656, commentaries. Sdei Chemed, zayin:12.]

In conclusion, if the ram *shofar* is unpleasant, the other *shofar* is preferred. If it is pleasant, but the other is nicer, the ram *shofar* should be used for the first *kolos*. This satisfies the Scriptural *mitzvah*, and the opinion that only a ram *shofar* is kosher. By using the more beautifully sounding *shofar* for the *tekios dimeumad*, one fulfills *hidur mitzvah*.

Sponsored in memory of Sarah bas Shmuel Blumenthal a”h, whose *yahrzeit* is on the 11th of Elul. ❧

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