

INTRODUCTION TO 2-תקיעת שופר

Professor Zev Safrai in his **מסכת ראש השנה for משנת ארץ ישראל עם פירוש ספראי**, Michlelet Lifschitz, 2011, provides the following introduction to **תקיעת שופר** beginning on page 274.

Ha'Tekiah¹

The requirement to sound the Shofar on Rosh Hashonah is referred to explicitly in the Torah and represents the primary and sole Mitzvah performed uniquely on Rosh Hashonah. “G-d said to Moshe and this is what G-d said: Speak to the Jewish People and tell them as follows: in the seventh month on the first day of the month will be a day of rest, Zichron Teruah, a holy day (Va’Yikra 23, 23-25). A further reference to Rosh Hashonah is found in Sefer Bamidbar in the section that described the sacrifices of the holidays: “in the seventh month on the first day, a holy day it shall be for you. No work should be performed . A day of Teruah shall it be for you (Bamidbar 29, 1).” We will deal with the difference between Zichron Teruah and Yom Teruah through an examination of Midrashic literature at a later point.

From the sources we can conclude that our ancestors held that the sounding that was required on Rosh Hashonah was to be performed only in the Beis Ha’Mikdash and in accompanying the sacrifices of the day. By the end of the Second Temple period the requirement to issue sounds on Rosh Hashonah entered into a second phase in which the requirement was expanded geographically to include all of Yerushalayim. This conclusion is drawn on our interpretation of the word: Mikdash found in the fourth chapter of Maseches Rosh Hashonah Mishna 1. The requirement to perform the Mitzvah entered a third phase when the requirement to perform the Mitzvah was expanded to the entire country except that in those additional areas, the sounds were to be issued only when Rosh Hashonah did not fall on a Shabbos. In a fourth phase, which began after the destruction of the Second Temple, the definition of Mikdash² was expanded to include any location where the central Jewish court sat; i.e. at Yavneh, and later, to locations where any court sat. The Mitzvah of Shofar belongs to that group of cherished Mitzvot which were initially performed solely in the Beis Ha’Mikdash and were later made a requirement in additional locations as part of the movement to decentralize the performance of Mitzvot.

The final phase in the development of the requirement to issue sounds on Rosh Hashonah occurred when the sounds were added to the framework of the communal prayers, as part

1. I wrote this translation. Any errors in the text should be attributed to me and not to Professor Safrai.

2. Places where the Shofar would be sounded even when Rosh Hashonah fell on a Shabbos.

of Tefilas Mussaf (Maseches Rosh Hashonah, fourth chapter, seventh Mishna). The Midrash provides reasons why the Tekios were added to Tefilas Mussaf. We will adopt the explanation provided by the Talmud Yerushalmi that our Sages directed that the sounds be made as part of Tefilas Mussaf in order that the maximum number of people would be present in synagogue to hear the sounds.

Evidence that in its expanded role the sounding of the Shofar began as an individual obligation can be found in the same sources that reveal the phases in the development of the requirement to issue sounds on Rosh Hashonah. Those sources not only describe the practice of the prayer leader sounding the Shofar, but they also provide proof that each person sounded the Shofar for himself (see our explanation to Mishna 9 in the fourth chapter of Maseches Rosh Hashonah) and that the accepted practice was that each individual sounded the Shofar as part of his individual obligation. Thus we find that in the generation of Yavneh a debate ensued as to whether an individual needed to sound the Shofar when he was present at a location in which the prayer leader was fulfilling that Mitzvah for those who could not sound the Shofar for themselves. One Sage involved in that discussion, Rabban Gamliel, expressed the opinion that under those circumstances each individual was not required to sound the Shofar. We can conclude from that discussion that the evolution of the obligation to sound the Shofar from an individual requirement to a communal one occurred in that era and that at that time, individuals stopped sounding the Shofar for themselves. That change in practice cannot be traced to a natural progression and cannot be easily explained. Consider that the Mitzvah of taking the four species on Succos evolved in a similar manner as the Mitzvah of Shofar. Both began as Mitzvot that were performed only in the Beis Hamikdash. Our Sages then imposed the requirement on the entire population (see for example Chapter 4, Mishna 4 of Maseches Rosh Hashonah). Yet, concerning the obligation to take the four species on Succos, each individual continued to perform the Mitzvah on his own. The same did not occur concerning the requirement to sound the Shofar on Rosh Hashonah. We can speculate that the transition of the Mitzvah of Shofar from an individual obligation to a communal one occurred for two reasons that are unique to Shofar: first, that the Mitzvah of Shofar became linked to the fixed prayer text, as did other Mitzvot. Second, not everyone possessed the physical acumen to be able to sound the Shofar, meaning that not everyone could perform the Mitzvah, nor did everyone own a Shofar.

As we previously noted, the initial requirement that the Shofar be sounded on Rosh Hashonah was limited to the sounding that took place only in the Beis Hamikdash. We do not know who sounded the Shofar in the Beis Hamikdash; whether it was one of the Kohanim or all the Kohanim. The Mitzvah of “Hak’Heil” may have served as the model for how the practice of sounding the Shofar on Rosh Hashonah was performed. On that occasion trumpets were sounded and like the sounding of the Shofar in the Beis Hamikdash: “The Kohanim stood by the gates and the openings with golden trumpets in their hands and they sounded a variety of sounds. Any Kohain who was not holding a

trumpet was viewed as not being a legitimate Kohain (Tosefta Sotah, Chapter 7, Halacha 15). The expansion of the requirement to sound the Shofar at locations outside of the Beis Hamikdash may have coincided with the institution of communal prayer at the end of the Second Temple era. In sources from that period, we find the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel disagreeing as to the content of Shemona Esrei for Tefilat Mussaf on Rosh Hashonah: the holiday of Rosh Hashonah when it falls on a Shabbat, the House of Shammai says it is necessary to recite ten Brachot and the House of Hillel says that it is necessary to recite nine Brachot. When Yom Tov falls on a Shabbat, the House of Shammai say it is necessary to recite eight Brachot including one Bracha for Shabbat and a second one for Yom Tov, with the one for Shabbat being recited first. The House of Hillel says that it is necessary to recite seven Brachot in Shemona Esrei with one Bracha that includes the themes of both Shabbat and Yom Tov but the Bracha must begin with a reference to Shabbat and end with a reference to Shabbat while the declaration of the sanctity of the day is recited in between. The House of Hillel said to the House of Shammai: is it not true that at a public gathering of the elders of the House of Shammai³, Choni Ha’Katan, while serving as the prayer leader, recited only seven Brachot in Shemona Esrei even though it was a holiday that fell on a Shabbat and all those present said about the prayer leader that he had brought peace and tranquility? The House of Shammai answered: that was a unique situation at which it was necessary to shorten the prayer service . . . (Tosefta Rosh Hashonah 2, [4] 17). This source confirms that the communal recital of Tefilat Mussaf took place while the Beis Hamikdash was still standing. However, the same source leaves unanswered the question as to whether the recital of Shemona Esrei was linked to activity in the Beis Hamikdash or was performed outside the Beis Hamikdash. We can suggest from our review of all the sources that even by the end of the Second Temple era, many still did not participate in communal prayer.

The fact that not everyone participated in communal prayer at the end of the Second Temple era provides additional evidence that the sounding of the Shofar in that era was an individual obligation. That may explain why some sources provide examples of the Shofar being sounded outside the synagogue (see our commentary to chapter 3, Mishna 7 and chapter 4, Mishna 7 of Maseches Rosh Hashonah). It was not until the generation of Yavneh that the practice of sounding the Shofar solely as a communal activity became the norm. The sounding of the Shofar by individuals came to a halt except for those individuals who because of their circumstances were prevented from joining a communal service. By the end of the generation of Yavneh a further requirement that three types of sounds be issued from the Shofar began to take hold as did the requirement that during the course of reciting Tefilat Mussaf, the sounds be issued three times. Yet even during that period, we find that Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yochanon Ben Nuri disagreed as to when the sounds needed to be issued.

3. Below Professor Safrai will interpret the fact that only the elders of the House of Shammai were present as providing evidence that the average person may not have participated in communal prayer at the end of the Second Temple era.

It would appear that the transition of the requirement to sound the Shofar from an individual obligation to a communal responsibility found expression in the wording of the Bracha that was recited before performing the Mitzvah. The accepted wording of the Bracha since the time of the Gaonim has been: Lish'Mo'Ah Kol Shofar” This wording expresses the obligation to hear the sound of the Shofar and not the obligation to sound the Shofar. The Gaonim were aware of a second version of the Bracha, one that is found in the Halachot of Rav Yehudai: i.e. “Lit’Koah B’Shofar⁴.” From the words of the Rishonim it appears that in their era some persisted in reciting the Bracha of “Lit’Koah B’Shofar” but the practice was discouraged.

The Torah does not provide a definition of the sounds to be issued from the Shofar. Two terms are used to describe those sounds: Tekiah and Teruah; Tekiah, alone and Teruah, alone (Sifrei, Bamidbar 73, page 68). It would appear that at first the type of sound to be issued was left to the discretion of the person sounding the Shofar (see our commentary to chapter 4, Mishna 9 of Maseches Rosh Hashonah). Only in a second phase, in the period of the Amoraim, did the current sound requirements take shape. The instructions in the Mishna speak of only ten sounds. During the era of the Amoraim, the number of sounds grew until the requirement reached 100 sounds. The basis for the expansion is outside of our discussion. We can speculate that the introduction of a Bracha before sounding the Shofar took hold in the generation of Yavneh, the same time when our Sages composed other Brachot that were to be recited before performing Mitzvot.

4. Translation: To sound the Shofar.