

*Rosh Hashanah***Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah Shechal Lih'yos BaShabbos***An adaptation of the Maamar found in Likutei Torah*Summary

*When the holiday of Rosh Hashanah occurs on Shabbos, we do not sound the shofar (ram's horn used on Rosh Hashanah). Mystically, the reason for this is that the spiritual effect of the mitzvah of Shabbos is similar to the spiritual benefit of the mitzvah of shofar, so that when it is already Shabbos, it is unnecessary to sound the shofar.*

*On the other hand, prior to the Second Temple period of Jewish history, the shofar was sounded even when the holiday occurred on Shabbos. This is because, in actuality, the spiritual benefit of shofar is somewhat more sublime than even that of Shabbos; it was therefore still desirable to obtain the spiritual effects of shofar even though the effects of Shabbos were present. During the Second Temple period, though, it was no longer possible to bring such a sublime spiritual level as that associated with the mitzvah of shofar into the physical world (except within the confines of the Temple itself), so the practice was stopped lest people come to inadvertently violate the Shabbos.*

---

THE MISHNA tells us (*Rosh Hashanah*, beginning of chapter 4), “[On] the holiday of Rosh Hashanah that occurred on Shabbos, they used to sound the *shofar* [ram's horn] in the

Temple, but not throughout the country.” This refers to the fact that even though it was permitted to sound a *shofar* in the Holy Temple itself on Shabbos, it was forbidden everywhere else. The Talmud, in its commentary on this Mishna, explains that the reason the *shofar* was not sounded throughout the realm (but only in the Temple) on Shabbos is because of the possibility that someone might inadvertently violate Shabbos by carrying a *shofar* in a public place (an act forbidden on Shabbos): to avoid this, the great sage, Rabba, decreed that the holy mitzvah of *shofar* be performed only in the Temple (by responsible rabbis), thereby removing the chance for the common folk to err.

Interestingly, though, there was no such decree against the people performing the mitzvos of *lulav* and *esrog* (the palm branch and citron fruit used on the Succos holiday) when the first day of Succos occurred on Shabbos. We must understand – as the commentary of *Tosfos* indeed asks – why should *shofar* be any different from *lulav*? Furthermore, the mitzvah of *shofar* is a Biblical commandment, bringing unimaginable spiritual benefit. Whatever was the justification for Rabba’s preventing the many great rabbis and holy saints who lived throughout the land of Israel in those days from performing this mitzvah on Shabbos – just because one or two absent-minded people might err?

In order to fully appreciate this matter, and penetrate to its very core, we must first discuss the essential nature of the mitzvah of *shofar*.

(And since the concept is a lofty one, perhaps the following analogy will aid in grasping it. Human nature is such that when one individual does another a favor or some other positive act, the recipient automatically feels closer, warmer, toward his or her friend. Not only that, but the extent of the “good vibrations” that the second person has toward the first is determined by the particular act or favor that was done to begin with. If the first person lent their friend a pencil, the borrower

might feel warm toward him or her; if they lent the person money in time of need, certainly the borrower's natural feelings of warmth and gratitude would well up from deeper within his or her personality; and, in both of those cases, the good will evoked would be relatively superficial compared to the overwhelming feeling of closeness that would result if the first person were to save the other's very life.

Our relationship with G-d is similar, in that whenever a Jewish person performs a mitzvah, he or she brings G-d closer to him or her. Indeed, the very word *mitzvah* is etymologically related to the word *tzavah*, "connection," since doing mitzvos connects the worshipper and G-d in a manner comparable to that discussed above. Not only does performing a mitzvah evoke a positive response from G-d, but the "depth" – allegorically speaking – of G-d's "warm feelings" or "good will" depends upon the mitzvah that was done and the manner in which it was performed. When a Jew drops a penny in a charity box, G-d is pleased, to be sure, but if the person actually found a poor individual and helped him or her to obtain food and clothing, a job, etc. – G-d's response is likewise much "deeper."

Armed with the above insight into mitzvos in general, we can now go on to examine the mitzvah of *shofar* in particular.)

Since *shofar* is one of the key mitzvos associated with Rosh Hashanah, we must consider it in light of its relevance to that holiday. The main theme of Rosh Hashanah is our proclaiming G-d King over the universe, and accepting His reign upon ourselves. (The reason we pray for forgiveness at this time is that it is one of the functions of a king to judge his subjects fairly, and to grant their requests; we ask G-d to overlook our imperfections and deign to be our King in spite of them, and to grant us a good and sweet year.)

Indeed, the above is the very purpose of creation: G-d didn't have to create the world in the first place, or He could have made it in such a way as to be obviously dependent upon Him; instead, He created the world with the appearance of separateness and independence from Him (as though such a thing were actually possible) – so much so that a person might not even realize that G-d exists (Heaven forbid) – with the intent that we voluntarily accept G-d's rule upon ourselves anyway. When we do this, showing that G-d's sovereignty extends even to areas where it is not obvious, it is one of the most beautiful manifestations of G-d's kingship, and evokes true delight, as it were, in G-d.

Now, saying that accepting G-d's kingship upon ourselves brings out true delight in G-d is really the same thing that we discussed above: by performing mitzvos, we bring G-d closer to ourselves – in different ways depending on the particular mitzvah. Of course, G-d doesn't really have human emotions; saying that “G-d is delighted” is simply anthropopathism. What we really mean by that (in this context) is that bringing about the open revelation of G-d's kingship where it had not previously been apparent is considered so vitally important, so precious to G-d, as to evoke a G-dly reaction – similar to the “good vibrations” in our earlier example – on the deepest level, just as the human emotion of “delight” is one of the deepest rooted and most basic of feelings.

In mystical terms, we say that G-d delights in His kingship: by our accepting His sovereignty upon ourselves, we bring about this delight. This causes G-d to want to reign as our king, and He is therefore willing to overlook our shortcomings and be our king anyway. Put another way, we Jews actually have the ability to arouse and strengthen G-d's attribute of kingship by evoking the sublime spiritual level mystically known as “delight” – and this is our task on Rosh Hashanah.

In particular, this deep-rooted level of G-dliness – the spiritual level referred to metaphorically as “delight” – is only brought out through the mitzvah of sounding the *shofar*. This is because the *shofar* epitomizes our submission to G-d as His subjects. A *shofar* is made of the horn of a docile animal, symbolizing a willingness to go along with G-d's will over our own. In addition, a *shofar*-blast is a piercing cry that reaches to the very depths of

a person's heart and soul; this represents, and in fact helps to stimulate, our heartfelt repentance – a repentance that is also rooted in the very deepest depths of the soul. Only this deep level of commitment to G-d, embodied in the mitzvah of *shofar*, is capable of evoking a correspondingly deep response from G-d, a response on the level referred to above as “delight.”

With that, we can finally understand why the mitzvah of *shofar* was not performed throughout the realm when Rosh Hashanah fell out on Shabbos. As mentioned above, the mitzvos all connect us with G-d on some level or other, and, as explained elsewhere, the mitzvah of Shabbos also happens to bring upon us G-dly response from the level known as delight. In other words, the day of Shabbos itself accomplished the same spiritual benefit as did sounding the *shofar*, so that it was unnecessary to sound the *shofar* on Shabbos.

This in itself makes a satisfying Torah insight, but in truth, we can carry the matter even further. After all, it will be remembered that it was the decree of Rabba that was responsible for the *shofar* not being sounded on Shabbos; prior to the enactment of this decree, it was indeed sounded. If all the above is so – that Shabbos itself accomplishes the very same spiritual effect as *shofar* – why did it work out that, at one time, the *shofar* was sounded even on Shabbos, with Rabba's decree changing the practice only later?

The answer, as before, can be appreciated by reflecting on the similarity G-d has made between our own human selves and G-d's “self,” so to speak. A person can discern many different aspects to his or her capacity for delight; in fact, it is probably one of the most multifarious emotions. Any one person may take delight in an unlimited number of things, with just one of the five senses (such as various kinds of food with the sense of taste), let alone with all five senses – and he or she delights in each thing to a different degree. G-d made humans in His image, as is well known, which means (among other things) that by Torah-guided contemplation of our own selves, we can better appreciate the corresponding, spiritual, aspects of G-d. In this case, just as human delight is not one indivisible level, but can actually be classified into many different degrees of delight, so too is it with the spiritual level we call delight.

Some mitzvos, even those that evoke a Divine response from the sublime level of delight, may evoke that response on a different level of delight itself than other mitzvos. Such is the case with Shabbos and *shofar*:

to put it in technical terms, the mitzvah of *shofar* elicits a response from G-d on the mystical level known as *bina d'arich anpin* (“*arich anpin*” being a term signifying an aspect of G-d’s “delight”), and draws spirituality from there down to the level of *bina d'atzilus*; whereas the mitzvah of Shabbos elicits a response from the comparatively lower level of delight called *chesed d'arich anpin*, drawing its spirituality down to the level of *chochmah d'atzilus*. The point is that since the mitzvah of *shofar* elicits a response from G-d on a deeper level than does Shabbos (even though they both express the G-dly quality of delight), it was still desirable to sound the *shofar* on Shabbos: even though “G-dly delight” was already present because of Shabbos, the sounding of the *shofar* would bring about even more, a heightened degree of G-dly delight.

Despite this, though, the rabbis saw fit to enact the decree of Rabba throughout the land. This decree was enacted in the time of the Second Temple, and the reason for it (on the mystical level of our discussion) was that after the destruction of the First Temple, the spiritual level of *bina d'atzilus* could no longer be openly expressed within this world. Since, as we said before, *shofar* draws down “good vibrations” from G-d to that very level (and from there to G-d’s attribute of kingship, as mentioned earlier) – and that level was no longer revealed during the Second Temple period – it was justified to stop sounding the *shofar* on Shabbos (which carried with it the possibility that some people might inadvertently transgress), since the sublime effects of the mitzvah could not be felt throughout the realm anyway. Because of the intrinsic holiness of the Temple itself, though, the effects of the mitzvah could still be felt there, which is why the *shofar* was sounded, in the Holy Temple, even when Rosh Hashanah occurred on Shabbos.

This also explains why the mitzvos of *lulav* and *esrog* were performed on Shabbos even during the Second Temple period. While Shabbos and *shofar* evoke a response from G-d on the level of true “delight,” *lulav* and *esrog* – while still being important mitzvos, of course – do not elicit a Divine response from that particularly high spiritual level. Thus, even though *bina d'atzilus* was concealed in the Second Temple period, the mitzvos of *lulav* and *esrog* were unaffected, since the G-dly response elicited by them did not involve that level anyway.

-- ### --

© 2002 Yitzchok D. Wagshul. Please note that the foregoing is an informal adaptation by a private person, and that, therefore, errors are possible. Please contact Yitzchok Wagshul (718-771-2528) with corrections or comments. Also, the Hebrew original contains much more than could possibly be presented here, and constitutes a much more direct transmission of the Alter Rebbe's teachings. Furthermore, the adaptation may contain supplementary or explanatory material not in the original, and not marked as such in any way. Thus, for those with the ability to learn in the original, this adaptation should not be considered a substitute for the maamar. Good Shabbos! May we, together with all our brethren and sisters, the Jewish People everywhere, be blessed with a k'siva vachasima tova, l'shana tova u'm'suka.

-- ### --

**You can now, Baruch Hashem, browse  
the full archives of these adapted  
ma'amarim at  
LikuteiTorah.com!**