

*Samuel Field Y Adult Center*

**The Prayers Of The High Holidays**

**Rosh Hashonah In The Bible**

Leviticus 23:24: In the seventh month shall be a day of rest unto you, a memorial blast [*zichron teruah*], a holy proclamation.

Num. 29:1: And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have an holy gathering; you shall do no labor; it is a day of blowing the horn (*yom teruah*) for you.

**The Role Of The Shofar In The Bible**

*At Mt Sinai And To Announce The Jubilee Year*

“And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount and the sound of the shofar, exceedingly loud” (Exod. 19:16). “And the sound of the shofar waxed louder and louder” (ibid. 19:19). The shofar was also used to announce the commencement of the Jubilee Year. “Then shalt thou make proclamation with a blast of the shofar. . . throughout all your land” (Lev. 25:9)

*The Binding Of Isaac*

Bereishis 22:13: And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in place of his son.

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### **What Does The Sound Of The Shofar Represent?**

#### *Celebrating G-d's reign over the world*

At first, the sounding of the Shofar played a role in the sacrificial practices of the Beis Hamikdash. Its purpose on Rosh Hashonah was to be part of the ceremony celebrating G-d's reign over the world and His perfect memory. That is the message of the verse (Bamidbar 10, 10): With trumpets and the sound of the Shofar while bringing the burnt offering and gift offerings. They will serve as a memorial before G-d. With trumpets and the sound of the Shofar, make music before G-d (Tehillim 98,6). Once the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the sounding of the Shofar became linked to the special Brachos of Rosh Hashonah; Malchiyos, Zichronos and Shofaros. The set of Brachos served as a memorial and as a substitute for the sacrifices once brought on Rosh Hashonah in the Beis Hamikdash. For that reason it was appropriate that the sounds of the Shofar, once an essential element of the Temple service, accompanied a set of Brachos. That is the message delivered by the Mishna. The sounds required by the Mishna represented the initial form of the Mitzvah of Tekias Shofar as the Mitzvah was designed to be performed after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

#### *Causing G-d TO Move From His Throne Of Judgement To His Throne Of Compassion*

Talmud Rosh Hashonah 16a-Rabbi Isaac said: Why do we sound the Shofar on New Year? You ask: why do we sound? The All-Merciful has told us to sound! What he means is, why do we sound a Teru'ah? You ask: why do we sound a Teru'ah? The All-Merciful has proclaimed 'a memorial of Teru'ah! What he means is, why do we sound a Teki'ah and Teru'ah sitting and then again sound a Teki'ah and Teru'ah while standing? It is done this way to confuse the Satan.

Commentary-In the generation of Rabbi Yitzchok we find for the first time, a collection of Midrashim, all of which, with the fall of the Beis Hamikdash, linked the sounding of the Shofar to that aspect of Rosh Hashonah which portrayed it as a day of judgment. Pursuant to that view of Rosh Hashonah, the sound of the Shofar acted to prompt G-d to judge the Jewish People not based on the letter of the law but with compassion.

The new practice was established on the basis of the view that the Shofar had the power to modify a negative judgment and to convert it into a positive one. This new concept required that an additional set of sounds be issued; ones that were independent and which were detached from the earlier established practice-the sounding of the Shofar during Shemona Esrei. This additional set of sounds needed to be separate from the Brachos of Shemona Esrei and in order to distinguish them, our Sages placed the requirement to sound them before Tefilas Mussaf.

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**The Sounding Of The Shofar As Part Of The Prayer Service**

Talmud Rosh Hashonoh 4,5-Mishnah. The order of the Brachos in the Mussaf Shemona Esrei is as follows: the leader says the Bracha of the patriarchs, that of mightiness and that of the sanctification of the name and includes Malchiyos, the kingship-verses with them and does not sound the Shofar. He then says the Bracha of the sanctification of the day and sounds the Shofar; Zichronos, the remembrance-verses and sounds the Shofar, and Shofaros, the shofar-verses and sounds the Shofar; and he then says the Bracha of Avoda, the temple service, the one of thanksgiving and the Bracha of the Kohanim. That represents the view of Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri. Said Rabbi Akiva to him: if he does not sound the shofar for the kingship-verses, why does he say the kingship-verses? Therefore the rule is as follows: he says the Bracha of the patriarchs and of the mightiness and of the sanctification of the name, and says the kingship-verses along with the sanctification of the day and sounds the Shofar; then he says the remembrance-verses and sounds the Shofar, and the Shofar-verses and sounds the Shofar. Then he says the Bracha for the temple service, the thanksgiving Bracha and the Bracha that contains the blessing of the Kohanim.

**From An Individual Obligation To A Communal One**

Commentary Of Professors Safrai To The Mishna-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'Shofar." 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.

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### **The Shofar As Part Of Jewish Life**

#### *The Shofar Was Readily Available*

The shofar was a mass-produced instrument, relatively cheap, a common household article in the homes of farmers, shepherds, and many urbanites. It was used as a means of communication in everyday life. The shofar was a less sophisticated instrument than the trumpet, and its use required little skill. Temple rituals and military strategy required only two trumpeters. However, when an occasion called for mass participation of wind instrumentalists, it was imperative to use the shofar. That was the reason for Joshua's use of shoferot prior to the fall of Jericho (Josh. 6:4).

#### *The Sounding Of The Shofar Began To Take On Greater Importance*

While the trumpet retained its primacy, the shofar was gradually introduced on special occasions to add volume to the sounds of the trumpets. King David (9th cent. B.C.E.) used trumpets and shoferot when he celebrated the return of the Ark (II Samuel 6:15). A psalmist urged the people to praise G-d with trumpets and the sounds of the shofar (98:6). As the importance of the shofar grew, another psalmist omitted the trumpet and urged that G-d be praised with blasts of the shofar (106:3).

#### *The Shofar Started To Invoke Repentance And A Return To G-d*

A new dimension was added to the significance of the shofar in the eighth century B.C.E., when its sounds were used to invoke penitence and a return to God, a concept which was to have a profound impact on the rabbinical development of Rosh HaShanah.

#### *The Sounding Of The Shofar As A Promise Of Salvation*

The 10th Bracha In Shemona Esrei

תקע בשופר גדול לחרותינו

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### **The Required Number Of Sounds From The Shofar**

Mishnah. The order of the Shofar blasts consists of three sets of three each. The length of a Teki'ah is equal to three Teru'ahs, and the length of a Teru'ah to three Yevavos (cries). If one issued the first Teki'ah in the usual manner but prolonged the second so as to make it equal to two, it counts only as one. If one recites the nine Brachot of the Rosh Hashonah Shemona Esrei and then procures a Shofar, he sounds a Teki'ah Teru'ah Teki'ah, three times. Just as the prayer leader is obligated to sound the Shofar, so too is every individual present obligated. Rabban Gamliel says: only the prayer leader need do so and through his action, those present fulfill their obligation.

Commentary On Mishna- The order of the Teki'Os are three: one set for the Bracha of Malchiyos; one set for the Bracha of Zichronos and one set for the Bracha of Shofaros.

Three sets of three-The sound of a Tekiah, a Teruah and and a Tekiah for each Bracha.

These sounds must be issued because the Torah refers to two types of sounds when referring to the sounds that must be issued on Rosh Hashonah.

### **The Number Required Grows To Thirty, Then To Sixty, Then To Ninety and Then To One Hundred**

#### *The Cries Of Sisera's Mother*

Sefer Ha'Manhig (11th Century) I heard that in Babylonia it is their practice to issue one hundred sounds from the Shofar on Rosh Hashonah. So it is written in the Aruch that the one hundred sounds that we issue from the Shofar are meant to correspond to the one hundred cries that Sisera's mother wept upon the death of her son.

#### *The 100 Cries Of A Woman In Labor*

Midrash-The cries that a woman expresses as she lays on the birthing stone; in ninety-nine of her cries, she pleads for death and in one cry she pleads for life. Because she is so enveloped with pain, she vows to never again engage in family relations with her husband. That is why she must bring a sacrifice, as it is written: she shall bring a sacrifice consisting of a one year old ewe.

#### *The Cries Of Our Foremother Sarah Because Of The Binding Of Isaac Her Son*

### **End With A Long Blast**

Mishna Breura-A long sound is issued from the Shofar to confuse the Satan so that he will not argue against the Jews for conducting themselves as follows: after completing the prayer service they return home, engage in a festive meal and act joyfully as if they are not fearful of the arm of justice.

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**The Middle Brachos Of Shemona Esrei In Mussaf On Rosh Hashonah**

Each Bracha includes ten verses from the Torah; three from the Five Books Of Moses; three from Scriptures and three from the Prophets.

- The verses of kingship are those verses in which references to the Kingdom Of G-d are found.
- The verses of remembrance are those verses which include references to G-d remembering with compassion when G-d remembers His creations.
- The verses of Shofaros are those verses in which are found references to the giving of the Torah, of the ultimate redemption and of songs of praise in which the sound of the Shofar plays a role.

**Why were verses included in the main prayer of Rosh Hashonah?**

**Philo-** Man's true function is to know G-d, and to make G-d known: he can know G-d only through His revelation, and he can comprehend that revelation only by continued study.

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**The Bracha Of Zichronos (Remembrance)**

deeds of them all. And You also remembered Noah with love, and were mindful of him with a promise of salvation and mercy, when You brought the waters of the Flood to destroy all flesh because of the wickedness of their deeds. Therefore his remembrance came before You, Lord our God, to make his descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth, and his offspring as the sand of the sea; as it is written in Your Torah: God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark, and God caused a wind to pass over the earth and the waters were calmed.<sup>1</sup> And it is stated: God heard their outcry, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.<sup>2</sup> And it is stated: I will remember My covenant with Jacob; also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.<sup>3</sup> And in Your holy Scriptures it is written thus: He has instituted a remembrance of His wonders; gracious and merciful is the Lord.<sup>4</sup> And it is stated: He has provided food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever.<sup>5</sup> And it is stated: He remembered for them His covenant and He relented, in keeping with His abounding kindness.<sup>6</sup>

וַיִּזְכֹּר And by Your servants, the Prophets, it is written as follows: Go and call out in the ears [of the inhabitants] of Jerusalem, saying: Thus said the Lord, I remember for you the devotion of your youth, the love of your bridal days, as you went after Me in the wilderness, in an uncultivated land.<sup>7</sup> And it is stated: I will remember My covenant [which

I made] with you in the days of your youth, and I will fulfill it for you as an everlasting covenant.<sup>1</sup> And it is stated: Is Ephraim not My beloved son, is he not a precious child that whenever I speak of him I recall him even more? Therefore My inner parts stir for him, I will surely have compassion on him, says the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

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### **Kol Nidre-1**

#### *A Prayer To Cancel Vows?*

Kolbo (12th Century)- The procedure to follow in annulling vows as provided by the Ram M'Rottenberg: How does one void a vow? Let the one who made the oath appear before an expert or before three laymen if no expert is available. He should then declare that he made an oath concerning such and such and regrets having done so. He also must say: had I anticipated that the vow would later cause me to become so despondent, I would have never uttered the vow. The expert or the most knowledgeable of the three laymen then asks: have you reached the point when you regret having uttered the vow? He must answer: yes. The expert then says: you are relieved of the vow; the prohibition has been removed or you are forgiven for your vow or similar such words. However, the expert should never say: the vow is cancelled or your oath has been retroactively annulled or similar words. Those words are ineffective because the Torah provides for only limited forms of annulment; i.e. in the case of a husband who annuls the vow of his wife or a father who annuls the vow of his daughter. An expert lacks the power to annul. He can only permit what was prohibited by vow or offer forgiveness for the person who made the vow.

#### *Cancelling Or Forgiving a Vow*

#### *Past Or Future Vows*

Talmud Nedarim 23b.-And he who desires that none of his vows made during the year be valid should stand at the beginning of the year and declare: 'Every vow which I may make in the future shall be null and void.' To be effective, he has to have in mind the aforementioned condition at the time that he utters his vow.



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### **Kol Nidre-2**

#### *Lifting Of An Excommunication Decree?*

#### **Purpose Of Excommunication (Cherem)**

Professor Daniel Goldschmidt- The ban is lifted for those who violated the rules of the community, particularly for those who were banned after being warned that they stood to be excommunicated. The threat was then carried out, thereby separating those individuals from the community. It is well known that at times of persecution and external pressure, communities took measures to protect themselves. They had no alternative but to banish those individuals who did not abide by those measures. Those who were excommunicated were not authorized to participate in communal prayer. If they appeared in synagogue, the service would be suspended since those present were forbidden to pray in the presence of the banned individuals. That ban was temporarily lifted for Yom Kippur even when those who were banned were not in a position to ask that the ban be lifted permanently.

#### **Lifting Of Excommunication ban For Yom Kippur**

Mordecai (13th Century)-We enter the synagogue and lift the ban on praying with those individuals who violated communal decrees even if those individuals have not asked that the bans be lifted. This practice is based on what we learned (Crisus 6b) Rabbi Shimon Chisda said: any fast day on which sinners in the community are not asked to participate is deemed to not be a fast day. This rule is based on the fact that the odor of galbanum is unpleasant and yet it was included among the spices for the incense (Kitores) used in the Beis Ha'Mikdash. Abaye said: 'We learn this rule from the verse (Amos 9, 6): And has founded His vault upon the earth.

#### **How Excommunication Carried Out**

Orchos Chayim - Cherem. If the court or the leaders of the community have a need to excommunicate a member of the community, they should do so in the presence of ten men and while one of them is holding a Sefer Torah. A Sefer Torah is held based on what our Sages taught: the behavior of a person who violates a ban is equal to the behavior of a person who violates all the laws of the Torah. The wording used to impose a ban on an individual are as follows: With this sentence by decree of the watchers (angels), this verdict by the order of the holy ones (angels), we excommunicate, swear and curse, with the consent of G-d, with the consent of the community and with this Sefer Torah, including the 613 Mitzvos written therein, in line with the ban imposed by Yehoshua on the booty captured from the city of Jericho and the curse that Elisha uttered against the youth and Gai'Chazei his student, the ban that Barak uttered against the city of Maroz (Shoftim 5, 23), the curse uttered by the Men of the Great Assembly against that man and the ban that Rabbi Yehudah son of Yechezkeil uttered against that man and in line with all the bans, curses, excommunications that were imposed from the time of Moshe Rabbenu to today.

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### **Kol Nidre-3**

#### **Cancelling Curses-Hatoras Kelalaos**

May it be Your will, G-d, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that all the curses, excommunications and banishments that I uttered or cursed, or swore to, or expelled or excommunicated against myself (if plural-that we cursed, swore to, expelled or excommunicated against ourselves) or against others who are of the Jewish faith, or if others cursed, excommunicated, or banished me or my wife, or my offspring, or any member of my family (us and our wives) (female-or my husband) (or our offspring or any member of our family). May it be Your will, G-d, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, our G-d who presides over heaven and earth that none of the aforementioned shall govern over us and will have no affect on our lives. May all curses be transformed into blessings as it is written (Devarim 23, 6): And G-d will transform for you all curses into blessings because G-d loves you (Yeshayahu 6, 7) and your sin will be set aside and all your misgivings will be forgiven.

Folktales Of The Jews, Vol. 2, Edited and with Commentary by Dan Ben-Amos, JPS, 2007, pages 179: The Hebrew and Aramaic texts of the *Kol Nidrei* recitation have a fair degree of ambiguity in the phrase *al nafshatana* (on our soul). The common interpretation renders the phrase “[all the vows . . . ] that we took.” However, in light of the incantation texts, it is possible to understand the phrase in the following sense: “that we brought upon our soul.” Furthermore, performed within a communal setting, the ritual has an added dimension of mutuality. On the one hand, it nullifies all the negative thoughts and verbal acts that were uttered against an individual, thereby making void all those that were directed against him or her. On the other hand, in the second part of the recitation, the speakers nullify all thoughts and speeches that they uttered publicly or privately against others. This is thus a moment of cleansing for self-protection and for forgiveness toward others.

In the magical literature, the term *neder* occurs as a synonym of the other terms in the *Kol Nidrei* as negative wishes, restrictions, and curses directed at other people. Consequently, evoking the principle of communal mutuality, the recitation of the *Kol Nidrei* implies a public denunciation of all the negative thoughts people harbored against each other, thereby cleansing themselves from the negative attitudes directed back at them. Such an interpretation transforms the readers from people who are going back on their word to anxious individuals who would like to rid themselves of any secret negativity. The worshipers are both subjects and objects, denouncing the negative feelings they harbored against their fellow members of the community and expecting them to do the same. The *Kol Nidrei* is a verbal magical ritual of communal protective purification, preparing each and every member of the community for life in the following year. Therefore it is solemn; therefore it is awesome: Life is in the balance.