YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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In memory of Batya Furst z"l  
Niftera 28 Elul 5765.   
Dedicated by her family.

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[**The Relationship Between Shofar and Prayer**](https://www.etzion.org.il/en/relationship-between-shofar-and-prayer-0)

Based on a shiur by

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### I. Introduction

The relationship between the shofar blasts and prayer – blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashana in particular, and blowing the shofar in general – can be examined in two different ways:

1) The shofar blast is a special type of prayer.

2) The shofar blast is distinct from the act of prayer, but a relationship does exist between them, the one act enriching the other.

One can argue that blowing the shofar is a fulfillment of prayer, albeit one that is different from prayer formulated in words. The shofar blast expresses a wordless prayer; it is sort of a silent plea that conveys messages and content even in the absence of words.

### II. The song in the temple

This question can be compared to another concerning the use of musical instruments and song in the Temple, a *mitzva* that is anchored both in Scripture and in the Halakha. The *gemara* (*Sukka* 50b) assumes that the music in the Temple consists of both vocal singing as well as instrumental music, the latter expressing content in an indirect manner.

The Sages disagree as to which was the essential feature of the music in the Temple – the vocal singing or the instrumental music. The view that maintains that the essential feature of Temple music is the instrument is presumably of the opinion that the required "song" is not mere musical sound, but rather content that is expressed **by way of** musical instruments. The musical instruments serve as a means to achieve the same goal – prayer – that underlies the entire endeavor.

However, one might deny this assumption and argue that instrumental music is not merely a **means** of expressing content, but rather an independent entity. Instrumental music is a **parallel** path of expressing content, not a substitute for vocal singing. According to this approach, instrumental music is not a substitute-prayer or a prayer in disguise; rather, it opens an additional channel of expressing praise and gratitude to God.

It seems to me that the formulation used in the *gemara* ("the essential feature of Temple music is vocal singing; the essential feature of Temple music is the instrument") reflects the first approach, which views the use of instruments as a means to express prayer.

### III. "And you shall sound the trumpets"

We may further better understand the essence of shofar blowing on Rosh Hashana based on what is stated regarding the trumpets that are sounded on fast days.

The verses speak of sounding the trumpets on two types of occasions. The first type consists of days of gladness and festivals, as is stated in *Parashat Beha'alotekha*:

Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed seasons and in your new moons, you shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings; and they shall be to you for a memorial before your God; I am the Lord your God. (*Bamidbar* 10:10)

The second type of occasion on which trumpets are sounded is times of trouble, war, and fasting:

And when you go to war in your land against the adversary that oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets; and you shall be remembered before the Lord your God and you shall be saved from your enemies. (*Bamidbar* 10:9)

Here, too, we may ask: Are the trumpets that are sounded on a fast day connected to prayer and crying out to God, which are the essence of the fast? Is there a *mitzva* to sound the trumpets whenever there is a general attack on the people of Israel dwelling in their land? Or are the trumpets perhaps a symbol, and not a substitute for prayer?

### IV. crying out to God

Perhaps we can infer something about this from the words of the Rambam at the beginning of *Hilkhot Ta'anit.* It is the Rambam's standard practice to define the essence of the *mitzva*, the underlying principle, in the introduction to the laws, and to enumerate the details of the action of the *mitzva* in the body of the laws*.* In the introduction to the actual laws, the Rambam writes:

[This text contains] one positive commandment: To cry out to God in the event of great distress that affects the community as a whole.

The Rambam then writes at the beginning of *Hilkhot Ta'anit* (1:1-3):

It is a positive Torah commandment to cry out and to sound trumpets in the event of any difficulty that arises which affects the community, as it is stated (*Bamidbar* 10:9): "[When you go out to war… against] an enemy who attacks you and you sound the trumpets…." [This commandment is not restricted to such a limited scope; rather] the intent is: Whenever you are distressed by difficulties – e.g., famine, plague, locusts, or the like – cry out [to God] because of them and sound the trumpets.

This practice is one of the paths of repentance, for when a difficulty arises and the people cry out [to God] and sound the trumpets, everyone will realize that [the difficulty] occurred because of their evil conduct, as it is stated (*Yirmeyahu* 5:25): "Your sins have turned away [the rains and the harvest climate]." This [realization] will cause the removal of this difficulty.

Conversely, should the people fail to cry out [to God] and sound the trumpets, and instead say, "What has happened to us is merely a natural phenomenon and this difficulty is merely a chance occurrence," this is a cruel conception of things, which causes them to remain attached to their wicked deeds. Thus, this time of distress will lead to further distresses.

The introduction to the laws implies that crying out vocally and sounding the trumpets are one and the same thing. Both verbal prayer and crying out with an instrument are part of the same fulfillment of pouring out one's soul in discourse with God.

But there may be a certain difference between the two. The trumpet blast may only be effective – both in the Temple and in times of trouble – in a specific context. The trumpets can be an expression of crying out to God, of supplicating before the Throne of Glory, but only in the specific circumstances of the Temple or after everyone has gathered together pouring out their hearts in prayer and supplication. Only then, after the wailing and verbal pleading have run their course, do the trumpet blasts purify the cry to God.

The same is true about the Temple music. Alongside the vocal singing and in its wake, the instrumental music assumes its character as another aspect of the prayer-song. This is not the case when we detach the trumpet blasts or the musical instruments from this context. In the absence of other content – of verbal prayer, of the Temple, of the crying and supplications that precede the blasts and instrumental music – their strength dissolves.

Although a close reading of the Rambam's words in *Hilkhot Ta'anit* indicates that he does not set as a precondition that the trumpets be sounded in the framework of a general outcry, this conclusion nonetheless seems to be self-evident.

It would seem that the two aforementioned models can also be applied to the shofar blasts sounded on Rosh Hashana and that those blasts can similarly be viewed as a certain fulfillment of prayer.

### V. THe shofar blasts on Rosh Hashana

The subject of the shofar blasts on Rosh Hashana has given rise to no small number of disagreements, touching upon both the content and form. Thus, for example, the Sages disagree about the difference between a *teki'a* and a *teru'a*, and they struggle with the question of the target of the blasts (i.e., to whom are they directed). With regard to the latter issue, it may be possible to distinguish between the different types of blasts. An examination of the sources reveals different possibilities:

1) The ceremonial dimension of shofar blowing: On one level, the shofar blasts remind us that Rosh Hashana is the day on which God is crowned as king of the world in general and of the people of Israel in particular. This coronation, this statement of "I am the Lord your God," is expressed through the shofar blasts. Trumpets and other wind instruments pay a central role in the announcement of the ascent of a mortal king to the throne. The sounding of the trumpets on such an occasion gives expression to the king's coronation – to the king himself, but more importantly to the people. Since "there is no king without his people," a festive ceremony is celebrated in order to express to the king's coronation. It is through these blasts that the public demonstrates its acceptance of the yoke of the new king's monarchy.

2) A second layer is reflected in the words of the Rambam, who writes in *Hilkhot Teshuva* that the shofar, with its various blasts, calls for repentance and awakening – directed not outward, but inward. The shofar calls out: "Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise." The shofar blasts constitute an autodidactic process. We stir ourselves up and direct the blasts of the shofar inwards, to the congregation, to each and every individual – to anyone whose hope and aspiration is to fully repent before his Creator.

### VI. THe two meanings of "prayer" in the teachings of *Chazal*

The two aforementioned approaches are not inherently connected to the world of prayer. *Chazal* teach us that the term "prayer" has two meanings, a broader meaning and a more restricted one. *Chazal* use the term "prayer" in the broader sense in reference to *Pesukei De-Zimra*, *Keriat Shema*, blessings, and supplications. In the more restricted sense, the term is used, especially by the Rambam, in reference to the *Shemoneh Esreh* prayer. Thus, alongside *Hilkhot Berakhot* and *Hilkhot Keriat Shema*, the Rambam establishes a separate section of *Hilkhot Tefilla*, and there the term is used in the more restricted sense in reference to the *Amida* prayer (the *Shemoneh Esreh*)*.*

In yet another context, the term is used in an even more restricted sense. The *gemara* (*Berakhot* 32a) states: "A man should always first recount the praise of God and then pray." Rashi explains this dictum in two ways. According to one explanation, "the praise of God" refers to *Pesukei De-Zimra* and *Keriat Shema*,which precede “prayer,” the *Shemoneh Esreh.* However, in *Avoda Zarah* (7b), Rashi explains: "The praise of God: The first three blessings – *Avot*, *Gevurot*, and the sanctification of God's name, in which there is no prayer, but only praise, and afterwards in the other blessings there are words of supplication and prayer." This implies that in this context, the term "prayer" refers to only part of the *Shemoneh Esreh* – an even more restricted section.

The blowing of the shofar as an expression of the coronation of the heavenly King may be considered prayer if we say that "praise and thanksgiving" is also considered "prayer." However, if we say that the term "prayer" refers specifically to the aspect of "supplication" in prayer (in accordance with Rashi's second explanation), it would seem that shofar blowing as coronation is not prayer.

We may detect, however, a third aspect of prayer in the very blowing of the shofar if we look at it from a different direction – if we see the blasts of the shofar as directed not at us, to stir our hearts to repentance, but rather at God.

### VII. the more a man bends his mind the more effective is his prayer

This point arises in the *gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* (26b). Ostensibly, the *gemara* is dealing with a technical aspect of the act of blowing a shofar, but in fact it relates to an exceedingly essential dimension:

R. Levi said: The *mitzva* of Rosh Hashana and of Yom Kippur is performed with a curved shofar, and on other days of the year with a straight shofar. But we learned in the *mishna*: The shofar of Rosh Hashana was a straight one of antelope's horn! Levi followed the view of the following *Tanna*, as it has been taught: R. Yehuda says: On Rosh Hashana they used to blow with curved shofars of rams' horns and on Jubilee years with shofars of antelopes' horns. Why, then, did he [R. Levi] not say that the law follows the view of R. Yehuda? If you were to say that the law follows R. Yehuda, I would say that in the case of the Jubilee also he was of the same opinion as R. Yehuda. Now we know [that this is not so]. What is the grounds for the difference [between R. Yehuda and the anonymous first *Tanna* in the cited *mishna*]? One authority [R. Yehuda] holds that on Rosh Hashana, the more a man bends his mind, the more effective [is his prayer], while on Yom Kippur [of the Jubilee], the more a man elevates his mind the better is the effect. The other authority holds that on Rosh Hashana, the more a man elevates his mind, the better the effect, and on fast days the more he bends his mind, the better the effect.

The *gemara* refers to the shape of the shofar against the background of the purpose and contents that the shofar is supposed to express. According to one opinion, on Rosh Hashana a man must “bend his mind” to God; according to the other opinion, he must “elevate his mind” when he stands before his Creator. However, both opinions agree that the spirit of Rosh Hashana is meant to direct a person to stand before God.

In his commentary on this passage, Rashi explains that the *gemara* is referring to the manner in which a person must stand in prayer on Rosh Hashana:[[1]](#footnote-1)

The more he bends his mind – In his prayer, his face directed to the ground, because of "And My eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually" (I *Melakhim* 9:3). Therefore, on Rosh Hashana, since it comes for prayer and to bring *Akeidat Yitzchak* to mind, the shofar must be bent, but on Yom Kippur of the Jubilee year, when it comes to declare freedom, the shofar must be straight, and he does not make a verbal analogy.

The more a person elevates his mind – Because of: "Let us raise our heart with our hand" (*Eikha* 3:41). Therefore, on Rosh Hashana, [the blasts are done] with a straight shofar, because it is for prayer, and the same is true of Yom Kippur of the Jubilee year, because there is a verbal analogy. But on a fast day, when it is to call for an assembly, we do not care, and so we use a straight shofar to distinguish. R. Levi agrees with R. Yehuda that for prayer we need a bent shofar, and regarding Yom Kippur he maintains that the Jubilee year is like Rosh Hashana as argued by the Rabbis; therefore, they both require curved shofars.

On Yom Kippur of the Jubilee year, the shofar blast is a declarative and demonstrative measure. In this context, R. Soloveitchik would refer to the Rambam in his *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, who views the *mitzva* of the Jubilee year as an expression of man's stature, achievements, and abilities.

This is not the case on Rosh Hashana. According to one opinion, on Rosh Hashana we demand a lowly stature and subordination of the heart: "The more he bends his mind the better." According to the second opinion, "the more he elevates his mind the better." But all agree that the shape of the shofar should accord with the objective of the shofar blast and that a connection should be created between the content of the shofar blowing and the person's standing in prayer.

It should be emphasized that we are not dealing here with a general, abstract connection, an atmosphere that envelops the individual and the congregation during the blowing of the shofar, but with a real connection; the shofar blast constitutes one of the voices of prayer. Hence, the same mode of expression of prayer, whether bent or straight, must find expression and be reflected in the shofar.

It is possible that this connection is necessary only when the blowing is done within the framework of prayer. When the shofar is sounded in isolation (for example, if at the time of prayer he did not have a shofar, and only afterwards he happened upon one), there would be no need for such a connection.

As an intermediate summary, we can say that the sounding of the shofar can be presented in one of two possible ways: 1) The blowing itself is a fulfillment of prayer; 2) The shofar is not part of the prayer, but nevertheless it maintains a connection and relationship to it.

### VIII. the Mutual enrichment of prayer and shofar blowing

Let us consider the second possibility. Is the shofar blowing a "fulfillment" of prayer, so that the shofar blowing is intended to enrich and intensify the prayer? Or is it perhaps the opposite – that prayer accompanies and gives content and meaning to the shofar blowing, but the main thing is the sounding of the shofar? Logically, there is no contradiction between the two possibilities. What we have here is a dialectic in which the prayer enhances the shofar blowing and vice versa.

Indeed, the words of the *Rishonim* reflect this understanding. There is a major disagreement among the *Rishonim* regarding the shofar blasts sounded during the *Shemoneh Esreh* (*teki'ot de-me'umad*).In addition to the obligatory blasts, there are also the "optional blasts." These are done to fulfill the enactment of R. Abahu (*Rosh Hashana* 34a), who maintains that we must blow a *shevarim*, a *teru'a*, and a *shevarim-teru'a* – with a *teki'a* before and after each one – due to our uncertainty regarding the definition of a *teru'a*. Thus, we must blow TShRT (*teki'a*, *shevarim*, *teru'a*, *teki'a*), TShT (*teki'a*, *shevarim*, *teki'a*), TRT (*teki'a*, *teru'a*, *teru'a*).

1) According to the Rif, in the *Malkhuyot* blessing we blow TShRT; in the *Zikhronot* blessing we blow TShT; and in the *Shoferot* blessing we blow TRT, so that over the course of the three blessings, we fulfill the enactment of R. Abahu.

2) According to Rabbeinu Tam, for each blessing, we blow TShRT.

3) According to the common practice, for each blessing, we blow TShRT, TShT, TRT.

The common practice is based on our desire to fulfill the *mitzva* in accordance with all opinions (see *Shibolei ha-Leket*, ad loc.), just as we aim to fulfill the *mitzva* in accordance with all opinions in the context of the shofar blasts that precede the *Shemoneh Esreh* (*teki’ot de-meyushav*).

The second opinion, that of Rabbeinu Tam, is somewhat difficult to understand, but it seem that the option of TShRT creates a combination of all the possible shofar blasts, and by juxtaposing it to each of the three blessings – *Malkhuyot*, *Zikhronot*, and *Shofarot* – we fulfill the *mitzva*.[[2]](#footnote-2)

### IX. TheShofar blasts before *Shemoneh Esreh* (*De-Meyushav*)and during *Shemoneh Esreh* (*DE-Me'umad*)

The position of the Rif, however, is very difficult to understand. The *Rishonim* attempted to argue, contrary to the view of the Rambam, that according to Torah law, there is in fact no uncertainty about the nature of the *teru'a* blast mentioned in the Torah; one fulfills his obligation with either form of *teru'a*,both the *shevarim* and the *teru'a.* The Torah requires a blast, but it makes no difference what type of blast. Thus writes the *Ba'al ha-Ma'or* (11a in the Rif):

The common practice has changed in recent generations from the original Halakha and from the enactment of R. Abahu, according to which we must blow TShRT for *Malkhuyot*, TShT for *Zikhronot*, and TRT for *Shoferot*.

The Rif explained this in his *Halakhot*: [This was done] so as not to overburden the congregation. This reason does not fully suffice. Rabbeinu Hai Gaon writes in a responsum that they had a tradition that both *shevarim* and *teru'a* is called a *teru'a* and that a person fulfills his obligation with either one, but the different places in Israel were divided in their practices; some did this way while others did another way. So R. Abahu came and unified the practiced, restoring all places to one practice so that there be no dispute between them and arranging all the practices as one.

The Ramban is not satisfied with this explanation. In his *Milchamot Hashem* (ad loc.), he adds:

We learn from here that since the obligation of *teki'ot* and *teru'ot* does not fall upon each individual, but rather the obligation is that the blessings be accompanied by shofar blowing, any type of blast suffices so that our prayers should ascend to Heaven by way of the shofar.

Therefore, on Rosh Hashana, since we have already fulfilled the Torah obligation of shofar blowing and each individual is not obligated in the blasts, all that we are left with is the obligation of reciting the blessings, regarding which it was enacted that they be accompanied by shofar blasts so that we should be favorably remembered by way of the shofar. It is therefore like a fast day, and with any type of blast we fulfill the obligation of blowing the shofar together with the blessings. Therefore, the Sages did not wish to needlessly trouble the congregation.

It is the common practice to blow a *teki'a* for each of them and a *teru'a* like one of the three possibilities of R. Abahu. This is a fine explanation, and if you come to challenge it, it is already the common practice.

According to the Ramban, just as on fast days, on Rosh Hashana the shofar blowing during *Shemoneh Esreh* is not a fulfillment of an obligation of shofar, but rather an obligation of reciting blessings. For this purpose, any shofar blast suffices, as is the case on fast days. There is therefore no need to consider the details of the type of shofar blast.

According to this approach, there is a difference between the shofar blasts before *Shemoneh Esreh* and the shofar blasts during *Shemoneh Esreh.* In the first set, significance is attached to the type of *teru'a*, whereas in the second set, the main thing is not the shofar blowing but rather the blessings; the shofar blasts merely accompany the blessings.

Here the shofar does not have an independent role; it is not a *mitzva* in itself. It is "planted" in the *Shemoneh Esreh* to give it a certain tone – "so that we should be favorably remembered by way of the shofar," as the Ramban puts it. Thus, what is important is not the type of blast, but the very blasting of the shofar, whatever it is. This is an obligation not of shofar blowing, but of prayer.

Accordingly, it is specifically the shofar blasts in the *Shemoneh Esreh* that are an obligation of prayer, whereas the shofar blasts before the *Shemoneh Esreh* are a fulfillment of the independent *mitzva* of shofar blowing.

It may be argued that even with regard to the independent *mitzva* of blowing the shofar, there are two aspects that are fulfilled at the same time: There is the aspect of the *mitzva* of blowing the shofar, which is an independent *mitzva*, but at the same time there is also a fulfillment of the *mitzva* of prayer.

### x. THe status of the "congregation" during the shofar blasts during the *Shemoneh Esreh*

As we saw above, the Ramban writes that the shofar blasts during the *Shemoneh Esreh* do not constitute an obligation that falls upon each and every individual. This is also the position of the Rambam (*Hilkhot Shofar* 3:7), who writes that the shofar blasts sounded during the *Shemoneh Esreh* are an obligation of the congregation:

The congregation is obligated to hear the shofar blasts together with the order of blessings.

How is this expressed? The prayer leader recites *Avot*, *Gevurot*, the sanctification of God's name, *Malchuyot*, and the shofar is sounded three times; *Zikhronot*, and the shofar is sounded three times; *Shofarot*, and the shofar is sounded three times; and he concludes the *Amida* with the *Avoda*, *Hodaya*, and the priestly blessing.

What is the source of this public dimension of shofar blowing? This can be explained in two ways:

1) The need for a "congregation" is related to prayer. Since the shofar blasts bear the character of "public prayer," they are imposed not on the individual, but upon the congregation.

2) Even if the shofar blasts are not connected to the prayer, a congregation is still needed. This is similar to the law regarding trumpets on a fast days, which, despite its being detached from prayer, is imposed specifically on the congregation.

Logically, however, one might have said just the opposite: It is not the shofar blasts that add a dimension to the prayer, but rather the prayer is meant to add another dimension to the shofar blasts.

The *Rishonim* discuss the nature of the extra shofar blasts, which are not part of the essential *mitzva*, but are sounded only "to confuse Satan." There is also a disagreement as to which set of shofar blasts are the essential ones and which are the secondary ones that are intended to confuse Satan.

Ostensibly, the blasts that are sounded before *Shemoneh Esreh* are the essential ones required by Torah law. In contrast, the blasts that are sounded during the *Shemoneh Esreh* are merely a fulfillment of prayer (according to the Ramban cited above), or, if you wish, a secondary layer by Rabbinic law of the shofar blasts required by Torah law that preceded them.

However, according to the *Ba'al Ha-Ma'or* (*Rosh Hashana* 10b in the Rif), the main shofar blasts are in fact the blasts that are sounded during the *Shemoneh Esreh*:

As for the common practice of blowing all the shofar blasts before the *Shemoneh Esreh* and reciting over them the blessing for shofar blowing, **it seems to me that this was not the case in the days of our Rabbis, the Sages of the Talmud, but rather this is a practice that was instituted in the later generations,** because of sick people and because of people who because of circumstances beyond their control must leave the synagogue early… Therefore, they advanced the shofar blasts for them before the *Shemoneh Esreh* and instituted to recite the blessing of shofar blowing over them using a short formula…

The short blessing over shofar blessing is a practice instituted in the later generations. **But the main blessings are the blessings of the *Shemoneh Esreh*,** namely, *Malkhuyot*, *Zikhronot* and *Shoferot*, and about them it was taught: "If one recited the blessing, and afterwards was given a shofar."

That which R. Yitzchak said: "Why do we sound a *teki'a* and a *teru'a* sitting, and why do we sound a *teki'a* and a *teru'a* standing" (*Rosh Hashana* 16a), is a different manner, as we will explain at the end of our words. **But the truth is that we do not have a blessing for shofar blowing from our Rabbis, other than the blessings of the *Shemoneh Esreh.***

The *Tosafot* in *Pesachim* voice a similar view, but according to them, in contrast to the *Ba'al Ha-Ma'or*, a blessing is recited over the shofar blasts sounded before *Shemoneh Esreh*, and not only because of a new custom that had recently been introduced. Nevertheless, even according to *Tosafot*, the main shofar blasts are those that are sounded during *Shemoneh Esreh*, whereas the shofar blasts before *Shemoneh Esreh* are merely a sort of introduction to the essence of the *mitzva* – the shofar blasts sounded during *Shemoneh Esreh*.

### XI. The main Shofar blasts and the secondary Blasts

What is the basis for viewing the shofar blasts sounded during *Shemoneh Esreh* as the main blasts? Perhaps this can be understood in light of what was said above. The shofar blasts before *Shemoneh Esreh* lack the essential element – the connection to prayer. From a "musical" point of view, these blasts include the various kinds of blasts – *teki'a*, *shevarim*, and *teru'a* – in various combinations, but they stand in isolation. In contrast, the shofar blasts sounded during *Shemoneh Esreh* are intimately connected to the prayer. This is the ideal format: creating a connection between the shofar blasts and prayer. Qualitatively, this intertwining raises the shofar blasts to a higher level.

It may therefore be suggested, in contrast to the words of the Ramban cited above, that it is not only that the shofar blasts "improve" the prayer, but that the prayer also "improves" the shofar blasts.

This dialectical relationship may work in both directions. It may be argued that it is specifically the shofar blasts before the *Shemoneh Esreh* that are given preference, because they stand on their own, without the prayer that accompanies them. According to this approach, musical sounds that stand alone are of greater intensity.

According to a second approach, preference is shown to the shofar blasts sounded during *Shemoneh Esreh*, which are integrated into the prayer, because they reflect the combination of the non-verbal sounds of the shofar and the verbal sounds of prayer. We are dealing no longer with an emotional fog of shofar blasts with unclear content, but with content that is spelled out and explained in the words of prayer.

### XII. A melody without a Melody

In light of the above, it is possible that the contribution of the prayer is not only the removal of the "fog" surrounding the contents of the shofar blasts, but also the combination of the shofar blasts and the prayer to create new qualities.

My revered teacher, R. Ahron Soloveichik *zt"l*, recounted in the name of the *Ba’al* *Ha-Tanya* that there are different kinds of melodies. A melody with words represents the lowest level; a wordless melody represents a medium level, a bit higher; but the highest of all is a melody without a melody.

Sometimes, explicit content is at a lower level. Anything that adds meaning and detail subtracts. At times, it is precisely muteness that adds strength – not only intensity, but also content.

The differences mentioned above, and the connection between shofar blowing and prayer, can be examined not only in light of "prayer" in general, but in relation to each of the unique components of the Rosh Hashana prayer: *Malkhuyot*, *Zikhronot* and *Shoferot*. The connection between prayer and shofar blowing can also be examined in light of the fundamental question of whether the one is indispensable for the other. By Torah law, one certainly can fulfill one without the other. However, the *Tosefta* in *Menachot* (at least according to one reading) teaches that the shofar blasts and the prayer are indispensable for one another.[[3]](#footnote-3) This is in contrast to the *Tosafot* in *Rosh Hashana* (33b, s.v. *shiur*), according to whom the prayers and the shofar blasts are not indispensable for one another; what the *gemara* means is that the shofar blasts themselves are indispensable for one another (and therefore if one knows how to blow all three blasts, he should blow, but if not, he should not blow at all), and the blessings themselves are indispensable for one another (and therefore one must recite all three blessings, or none of them at all).

The shofar blasts and the prayers can be viewed as two "competing" factors, each one competing for primacy over the other. But they can also be seen as a couple walking together, each one giving strength to the other, the two of them together leading to a stronger and richer fulfillment of standing before God.

May God hear the sound of our shofar blasts and the sound of our prayers with favor, and may we merit complete redemption speedily in our days. Amen.

(This *shiur* was delivered at a Torah conference held in Jerusalem on 22 Elul, 5763 [2003], under the auspices of Yeshivat Har Etzion.)

1. Rashi alludes here to the *gemara* in *Yevamot* (105b), which speaks of the proper physical stance of a person engaged in prayer. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This works if we overcome the problem of the interruption between the Torah-mandated *teru'a* and the blast next to it (if we assume that only one of the possibilities – *shevarim* or *teru'a* – is the Torah-mandated *teru'a*). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. And so too the *gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* 34a. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)