**SALT | Haazinu – Shabbat Shuva 5784 – 2023**

**By Rav David Silverberg**

Motzaei Shabbat

When Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, the *shofar* is not sounded. The Gemara in Masekhet Rosh Hashanah (29b) initially considers the possibility that Torah law itself suspends the *mitzva* of *shofar* when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, but then concludes that this suspension was enacted by the Sages. Using their authority to override Torah law (under certain conditions), the Sages legislated that the *shofar* should not be blown on Shabbat, given the concern that this may lead to Shabbat desecration. Specifically, they feared that somebody might carry the *shofar* through a public domain, which is forbidden on Shabbat (but allowed on Yom Tov when it falls on a weekday).

The *Acharonim* debate the question of whether one who, for whatever reason, blew the *shofar* on the first day of Rosh Hashanah which fell on Shabbat, has fulfilled the *mitzva* of *shofar*. Some, including Rav Yoav Yehoshua Weingarten (*Kaba De-kashyata,* 99), draw a comparison to *Tosafot*’s discussion in Masekhet Sukka (3a) regarding the situation of one who, on Sukkot, eats in the *sukka* from a table situated outside the *sukka*. The Sages enacted that one should not eat in the *sukka* in this fashion (Mishna, Sukka 28a), and *Tosafot* comment that one who does so is not credited with the fulfillment of a *mitzva.* Although Torah law allows eating in this fashion, the *mitzva* is not fulfilled this way, even after the fact, once the Sages enacted that it should not be done. By the same token, Rav Weingarten writes, one who blew the *shofar* on the first day of Rosh Hashanah which fell on Shabbat did not fulfill the *mitzva* at all, as the Sages’ enactment effectively uprooted the *mitzva* entirely. By contrast, Rabbi Akiva Eiger (*Derush Ve-chiddush*, 8) and the *Avnei Neizer* (Y.D. 141) maintained that the *mitzva* is fulfilled, since, after all, Torah law requires sounding the *shofar* even when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. In their view, although the Sages suspended the requirement of *shofar* on Shabbat, a *mitzva* has been fulfilled if one nevertheless sounds the *shofar*.

A practical difference between these two perspectives arises according to the Sephardic practice to recite the *berakha* of *she-hechiyanu* before sounding the *shofar* only on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. The *Shulchan Arukh* (O.C. 600:3) writes that *she-hechiyanu* is recited before *shofar* blowing on the second day only if the first day was Shabbat, and thus the *shofar* was not blown that day – indicating that when the first day does not fall on Shabbat, and thus the *shofar* is blown on the first day, *she-hechiyanu* is not recited on the second day. Since the *shofar* was already blown on the first day, the *berakha* of *she-hechiyanu*, which is recited the first time a *mitzva* is fulfilled, is omitted on the second day. The Rama notes the Ashkenazic practice to recite *she-hechiyanu* on the second day even if the first day was not Shabbat. According to the *Shulchan Arukh*’s ruling, which is followed in Sephardic communities, the question arises whether one who, for whatever reason, sounded the *shofar* on the first day of Rosh Hashanah which fell on Shabbat would recite *she-hechiyanu* before *shofar* blowing the following day. This question would depend on the debate mentioned above. According to Rabbi Akiva Eiger and the *Avnei Neizer*, the Torah obligation of *shofar* was fulfilled on the first day, despite its being Shabbat, and thus there would be no reason (according to Sephardic custom) to recite *she-hechiyanu* when fulfilling the *mitzva* again on the second day. However, according to the *Kaba De-kashyata*, the Sages uprooted the *mitzva* on Shabbat altogether, such that no *mitzva* is fulfilled by sounding the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah when it falls on Shabbat. Therefore, one who blew the *shofar* on that day would recite *she-hechiyanu* when blowing the *shofar* on Sunday, the second day of Rosh Hashanah, as he then fulfills the *mitzva* for the first time.

Sunday

Yesterday, we noted the debate among the *Acharonim* concerning the case of a person who, for whatever reason, blew the *shofar* on the first day of Rosh Hashanah which fell on Shabbat. The Sages legislated that the *mitzva* of *shofar* is not performed when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, but, according to some *Acharonim*, since Torah law requires blowing the *shofar* that day, one who does so fulfills the Biblical command. Others, however, maintain that the Sages entirely uprooted the Biblical obligation of *shofar* when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, such that one who blows *shofar* that day does not perform any *mitzva* at all.

[Rav Asher Weiss](https://beinenu.com/sites/default/files/alonim/148_61_84.pdf) addresses this topic in reference to a question he was asked during the coronavirus pandemic regarding a gravely ill patient who, before Rosh Hashanah, feared he would need to be hospitalized on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, which, on that year (5781/2000), fell on Shabbat. If the patient would need to spend the second day of Rosh Hashanah – Sunday – in the hospital, then he would be unable to hear the *shofar* blowing. The patient thus wondered if, in the event he must go to the hospital during the first day – Shabbat – he should first have the *shofar* blown for him, despite its being Shabbat, as otherwise he would not have the opportunity to hear the *shofar* that year. Perhaps, he thought, given that his only option for hearing the *shofar* blowing was to hear it on Shabbat, he should do so.

At first glance, the *halakha* in this case depends on the aforementioned debate among the *Acharonim*. If *Chazal* eliminated altogether the *mitzva* of *shofar* when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, then, certainly, there would be value whatsoever in hearing the *shofar* on Shabbat, even if one knows he will be unable to hear the blowing the next day. If, however, the *mitzva* is fulfilled on the first day when it falls on Shabbat, despite the rabbinic suspension of the obligation, then, seemingly, one who knows he will be unable to hear the *shofar* on the second day, Sunday, should try to do so on the first day, despite its being Shabbat.

However, Rav Weiss dismisses this line of reasoning, and writes that unquestionably, according to all opinions, one should not blow the *shofar* when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. Even according to the view that one who did blow the *shofar* that day has, after the fact, fulfilled a *mitzva*, it is clear that this should not be done. Once *Chazal* established that the *shofar* is not sounded on Shabbat, we are bound to observe their ordinance, regardless of whether one will be able to hear the *shofar* the following day.

Rav Weiss references in this context a responsum by Rav Efrayim Oshry, in *Mi-ma’amakim* (4:5), regarding a situation that arose in the Kovno Ghetto on the first day of Sukkot, 5703 (1942). Unfortunately, the Jews in the ghetto did not have access to the *arba minim*, but, as it turned out, a certain Jew had arrived from Vilna with a set of *arba minim* before Yom Tov – which began that year on Shabbat. The Nazis ordered that the Jew must return to Vilna on Motzaei Shabbat, the second night of Yom Tov. On Shabbat, the first day of Yom Tov, many Jews in the ghetto took the *arba minim*, despite the rabbinic enactment not to take the *arba minim* on Shabbat. Since this was their only opportunity to fulfill the *mitzva* that year, they felt they should do so, despite *Chazal*’s having suspended the obligation of *arba minim* on Shabbat. Rav Oshry relates that after Shabbat, he brought this question to the ailing *rav* of Kovno, Rav Avraham Dov Ber Kahana-Shapiro (the *Devar Avraham*). Rav Kahana-Shapiro replied that the Jews were allowed to take the *arba minim* on Shabbat, and even recite a *berakha* over the *mitzva*, because *Chazal*’s enactment was not intended for this kind of circumstance.

Rav Weiss avers that this remark was not intended as an actual halakhic ruling which can serve as a precedent relevant to other situations. Rav Kahana-Shapiro here was bemoaning the unparalleled hardship and suffering the Jews were enduring during the Holocaust, observing that their dire circumstances could not have been foreseen by *Chazal.* After the fact, he was not going to voice disapproval of the ghetto inmates’ fierce desire to perform a *mitzva*, and so he made this comment justifying their decision. We cannot, Rav Weiss contends, reach halakhic conclusions on the basis of this precedent regarding other situations of a *mitzva* which would be impossible to perform after Shabbat. If the Sages enacted that it is suspended on Shabbat, then one should not perform it on Shabbat, regardless of the impossibility of fulfilling the *mitzva* the next day.

Monday

The Rambam, in *Hilkhot Teshuva* (2:2), defines *teshuva* as “abandoning” the sin which one has committed, and resolving to never repeat the wrongful action again. One of the verses he cites that express this notion appears in the prophecy at the end of Sefer Hoshea which is famously read as the *haftara* on Shabbat Shuva (the Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). Hoshea implores *Benei Yisrael* to repent, and instructs them to proclaim that “*lo nomar od ‘Elokeinu’ le-ma’asei yadeinu*” – “we will no longer say to the product of our hands: ‘Our God’” (Hoshea 14:4). The people are to make the commitment to abandon pagan beliefs and practice, and to verbally pronounce that they would no longer look to their idols and statues as deities.

The Tolna Rebbe suggested that the Rambam’s citation of this verse might also be intended as an allusion to one of the vitally important components of the *teshuva* experience – humility. A genuinely penitent sinner must be willing to acknowledge that “*ma’aseh yadav*,” his work and effort, is not a “God.” As the verse continues, “*asher bekha yerucham yatom*” – “through You an orphan is pitied.” When somebody is helpless and forlorn, as in the case of a young orphan, God is capable of assisting and caring for him – proving that ultimately, we are all in His care and dependent entirely on Him. While we are encouraged to work, produce, achieve and exert effort to care for ourselves and meet our needs, we must never regard these efforts as “God,” as the cause of our success. This recognition of our dependence on God, the Tolna Rebbe posited, is a crucial part of the *teshuva* process. Repentance requires humble submission to God’s authority, and this sense of submission entails an awareness of our limitations, our frailty, and our dependence on the Almighty’s protection and blessing. When we acknowledge our reliance on God, we realize that the best way to help ourselves is by fulfilling His will, and that nothing is more harmful to us than disobeying Him. As we declare in the *vidui* (confession) prayer, “*ve-lo shava lanu*” – any benefit we might have received from our wrongdoing was not worth the great harm that it causes. The prophet thus urges us to recognize that our work and effort, important as they are, do not guarantee our success, and we must therefore humbly submit to God’s authority, looking to Him as the true source of all blessing and prosperity.

Tuesday

The Gemara in Masekhet Yoma (86b) teaches, “Repentance is great, for it overrides a Biblical prohibition.” The “prohibition” referred to here is the command in Sefer Devarim (24:4) forbidding remarrying one’s wife whom he had divorced, if she had married somebody else in the interim. The prophet Yirmiyahu (3:1) likens *Benei Yisrael*’s betrayal of God to a wife who had a relationship with a different man after her divorce, and assures us that God, as opposed to the husband in such a situation, invites the people back. Even after we have betrayed the Almighty, bonding with foreign deities, ideals or practices, He still wants us to return to Him, despite His own command that a husband may not bring back his wife after she had been involved with a different man.

Why would God be entitled to break His own rule, and what might this teach us about the concept of *teshuva*?

Rav Ezra Bick suggested an explanation by analyzing the reason behind the prohibition against remarrying one’s divorcee after she had been in another relationship. It stands to reason that the Torah forbade this remarriage because of the diminishing of trust that occurs as a result of the interim relationship. Marriage is characterized by absolute, unlimited commitment, which requires a great deal of trust and confidence in the other party. After a spouse had an intimate relationship with somebody else, either after divorce, and all the more so as a betrayal of the marriage, the level of trust has been compromised. If the husband brings the wife back after she had another relationship, he will likely be reluctant to commit himself to her unlimitedly the way that marriage requires.

In the context of God’s relationship to *Am Yisrael*, this diminishing of trust does not come into consideration. Rav Bick explained that our relationship to God is based on our ambition and drive, far more so than our actual spiritual standing. We earn God’s love through our commitment to continue growing and advancing, by striving to draw closer to perfection. As flawed human beings, we will never actually achieve perfection, and so this is not what God expects of us. He expects us to constantly strive to improve, to always work to take the next step forward. This is why our past betrayal does not matter once we repent, when we make the commitment to move forward and improve. If we genuinely commit to progressing and moving forward, then God welcomes us back and restores His close relationship with us.

This is why the prohibition of *machazir gerushato* – bringing back one’s divorcee after she had been with another man – is not applicable to God’s relationship with *Am Yisrael*. This relationship, by definition, does not require perfection, as we human beings will never attain perfection. It requires instead a commitment to constantly work toward moving closer to perfection, a commitment which can be made irrespective of anything that happened in the past. Even if we have betrayed God, we are fully capable of resolving to improve ourselves, and this sincere commitment is itself the foundation upon which our relationship with the Almighty rests. Unlike in the case of marriage, the past has no bearing on the current state of the relationship, as long as we are striving and working to advance.

Wednesday

We read in Parashat Haazinu of the prophetic poem which warns of the calamities that God would bring upon *Benei Yisrael* if they betray Him and embrace idol worship. This poem, as God told Moshe at the end of Parashat Vayelekh (31:19-21), was to serve as a “testimony” of God’s warning, showing *Benei Yisrael* that their betrayal was the cause of the exile that they would endure.

After presenting this poem, the Torah relates that Moshe and his successor – Yehoshua – dictated it to the people (32:44). Rashi, citing the *Sifrei*, takes note of the fact that the Torah here refers to Yehoshua by his original name, Hoshea, and not by the name “Yehoshua” by which he became known. The *Sifrei* explains that the name “Yehoshua” signified his special stature, as Moshe’s primary disciple and, ultimately, his successor. The Torah calls Yehoshua “Hoshea” in this context to indicate that “he did not become arrogant, for although greatness was now granted to him, he lowered himself as he had been in the beginning.” Yehoshua was now assuming the position of leader in Moshe’s place, but he nevertheless remained as humble as he had been when he was still known as “Hoshea,” before rising to the unique stature on account of which he became known as “Yehoshua.” For this reason, the Torah here uses the name “Hoshea.”

Rav Tzvi Ungar, in *Emunat Tzvi*, draws our attention to the phrase “*hishpil atzmo*” – “he lowered himself,” which implies a proactive effort on Yehoshua’s part. The *Sifrei* does not describe Yehoshua as naturally feeling humble. His immediate, instinctive reaction to his newfound stature of prominence was not a sense of unworthiness. This humility was something he needed to work in order to develop. His instinctive response was – or would have been, if not for the efforts he expended – the emotion that most people would experience upon being named to a prestigious post: feelings of pride and satisfaction. But Yehoshua “*hishpil atzmo*” – made a conscious effort to resist this emotional response, to remain cognizant of his faults and his limitations, to remember that he did not necessarily deserve the fame and honor which he now received.

This observation regarding the *Sifrei*’s comments brings to mind a famous letter written by Rav Yitzchak Hutner (*Pachad Yitzchak – Iggerot U-ketavim*, 128) to a former student who had expressed to his rabbi his feelings of spiritual inadequacy. Rav Hutner explained to the student that religious commitment is fraught with struggle, and entails waging internal battles which will not always be won. It is a common fallacy, Rav Hutner writes, that the exceptionally righteous attained their stature of piety easily, without struggle and effort. Even the legendary *Chafetz Chaim*, Rav Hutner writes, struggled mightily, and experienced numerous setbacks, along his journey to spiritual greatness. All good habits and qualities that we seek to develop require hard work; becoming the people whom we want to become is not going to be easy, and we must never delude ourselves into thinking that it will. We must be prepared to put it in the effort, and to exercise patience, as we set out to grow, and we should not feel discouraged by the inevitable setbacks and obstacles that we will confront over the course of this lifelong journey.

Thursday

The famous prophecy of Hoshea which is read as the *haftara* on the Shabbat preceding Yom Kippur begins, “*Shuva Yisrael ad Hashem Elokekha, ki khashalta ba-avonekha*” – “Return O, Israel unto the Lord your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity” (Hoshea 14:2).

Most commentators (see, for example, *Metzudat David*)understand the phrase “*khashalta ba-avonekha*” to mean that *Benei Yisrael* have “stumbled” – meaning, they have encountered crisis and hardship – as a result of their iniquities. The prophet points to the troubles that God brought upon the people because of their wrongdoing, and urges them to repent in order to earn God’s favor and avert further calamities.

We might, however, suggest a different approach, explaining that the prophet implores the people to acknowledge that their iniquity was a “stumbling block,” a failure. He calls upon them to challenge their assumptions about the decisions they’ve made and the direction they’ve taken, and to admit that they were mistaken. Indeed, two verses later, the prophet instructs the people to proclaim, “Assyria will not help us…and we will no longer call the creation of our hands ‘our God’.” They had chosen to rely on foreign powers, and foreign deities, instead of the Almighty, and Hoshea urges them to recognize that “*kashalta*” – they had “stumbled,” they made the wrong decisions about how they could help themselves and find the security that they desired. He calls upon them to repent “*ki khashalta ba-avonekha*” – because the iniquities they had committed thinking that they would thereby gain and improve their condition, were in fact a grave mistake.

Often, we think of *teshuva* as an effort to break the bad habits that we know are bad, to regret mistakes that we know we’ve made, and to commit to work harder to avoid the pitfalls that we know we occasionally fall into. Undoubtedly, this is a vitally important component of the *teshuva* process. However, another component, which might, in a sense, pose an even greater challenge, is to humbly challenge our assumptions about ourselves, to question the behaviors and habits that we have always thought to be correct. We recite in the introduction to the *Selichot* prayers, “*Nachpesa derakheinu ve-nachkora, ve-nashuva eilekha*” – “We shall search through our ways and investigate, and we will [then] return to You.” This clearly refers not to repentance for the sins we know we commit, but rather to finding the mistakes which we do not yet realize we commit. Besides pledging to redouble our efforts to correct known bad behaviors, we must also undergo the very uncomfortable process of searching for our bad behaviors, thinking of habits and patterns that we assume to be legitimate but might actually be improper. This kind of honest, unbiased self-assessment, acknowledging that “*kashalnu*,” that actions which we have assumed to be appropriate are in fact wrong,is crucial for growth, and part of our *teshuva* obligation during these ten days of repentance.

Friday

Moshe pronounces as part of his introduction to the poem of Haazinu, “*Ki Sheim Hashem ekra, havu godel l-Elokeinu*” – “When I call the Name of the Lord, give praise to our God” (32:3).

The simplest understanding of this verse, seemingly, is that offered by the Rashbam, who explains that Moshe refers to his descriptions of God’s miraculous care of *Benei Yisrael* in the desert, which appear in the subsequent verses. Moshe was telling the people that upon hearing about these miracles, and the kindness that God showed them, they must give praise and express gratitude for all He had done for them throughout their sojourn through the barren desert.

The Gemara in Masekhet Yoma (37a) points to this verse as the source for the requirement to respond to the mention of God’s Name. The Mishna (Yoma 35b) describes how, on Yom Kippur, the people in the Temple courtyard would bow upon hearing the *kohen gadol* utter God’s Name, and respond, “*Barukh Sheim Kevod Malkhuto le-olam va-ed*” (“Blessed is the Name of the Glory of His Kingship, for all eternity”). The Gemara explains that this requirement is indicated by this verse in Parashat Haazinu, in which Moshe tells the people when they hear “the Name of the Lord,” they must respond and “give praise to our God.”

More famously, the Gemara in Masekhet Berakhot (21a) cites this verse as the Biblical source for the obligation of *birkat ha-Torah* – to recite a *berakha* each day before we learn Torah. According to this reading, the phrase “*Ki Sheim Hashem ekra*” refers to the study of Torah, through which we encounter God, and we are required to “give praise to our God” by reciting a blessing over the precious gift of Torah study.

Rav Uziel Meizlish, in *Tiferet Uziel*, creatively suggests reading this verse to mean that when we “call the Name of the Lord,” and turn to Him in prayer, we must “give praise to our God,” and express gratitude over the privilege we have to speak to the Almighty. We should never take for granted the blessing we are given to recognize God’s control and authority over the world, to pray to Him and to give Him praise. Thus, each time we “call the Name of the Lord,” we must feel appreciative for this privilege.

During the *chazan*’s repetition of the *Shemona Esrei* prayer, as he recites the blessing of *modim*, expressing gratitude to God, the congregation recites a text known as “*modim de-rabbanan*,” a combination of brief recitations brought by the Gemara in Masekhet Sota (40a). These include an expression of gratitude “*al she-anu modim lakh*” – “for the fact that we thank You.” Rashi explains that we thank God “for Your having put it in our hearts to be attached to You and thank You.” In other words, we are grateful for feeling grateful. The ability to recognize God’s grace and kindness, and to genuinely feel blessed and appreciative, is a special privilege. Many people go through life dissatisfied and unhappy because they do not experience gratitude, because they are constantly focused on what is not right in their lives, rather than focusing on what is right. The opportunity we have to “call the Name of the Lord,” to recognize His blessings, to appreciate all that He does for us, is truly a privilege for which we should feel grateful, as it allows us to live contentedly and with true joy and satisfaction at every stage.

(Based on a [*shiur*](https://www.youtube.com/live/rp36hpcd3vg?si=kazQp5u6o2Cgh_Cs&t=1558)by Rav Efrem Goldberg)