

THE SHOFAR WE DID NOT BLOW

Avraham's Command, Yitzchak's Mesorah

Source Sheet — Rosh Hashanah 5787

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1. The Shofar and the Akeidah — Rosh Hashanah 16a

תקעו לפני בשופר של איל כדי שאזכור לכם עקידת יצחק בן אברהם ומעלה אני עליכם כאילו עקדתם עצמכם לפני

“Sound before Me the horn of a ram, so that I will remember for you the binding of Yitzchak son of Avraham, and I will regard

you as though you had bound yourselves before Me.”

2. Avraham Heard; Yitzchak Received — Bereishis 22

Hashem commands Avraham:

קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק והעלהו שם לעולה

Yitzchak asks:

הנה האש והעצים ואיה השה לעולה

Avraham answers:

אלקים יראה לו השה לעולה בני וילכו שניהם יחדו

Rashi:

וילכו שניהם יחדו בלב שוה

Avraham received the command directly. Yitzchak asked, understood, and then proceeded together with his father. בלב שוה

3. A Teaching Said in the Name of Rav Hutner

מי שאין לו אמונת חכמים אין לו שייכות כלל לעניינה של עקידת יצחק

Yitzchak did not hear Hashem's command directly. He received it through Avraham and gave himself to the Akeidah with complete trust.

This gives us a foundation of mesorah:

אב לא מנחיל שקר לבנו

“A father does not knowingly transmit falsehood to his son.”

Source note: This teaching is said in the name of Rav Hutner in Sefer Doresh Tov, Shlussberg edition, edited by Yaakov Posen, pp. תס"ט תס"ז. The precise original location in Rav Hutner's own writings is not given there.

4. The Two Days — A Suggested Derush

- First day / Avraham: we ordinarily blow because of the direct Torah obligation of shofar.
- Second day / Yitzchak: we blow again because the rabbinic day and its shofar are received through Chazal and mesorah.

This pattern exists in an ordinary year when shofar is sounded on both days. It is presented as a derush, not as an explicit statement of Chazal.

The Added Layer When Day One Is Shabbos

The first day remains a Torah day with a Torah obligation of shofar. But Chazal direct us not to blow. Yitzchak's mode of receiving Hashem's will through the chachamim therefore enters Avraham's day as well.

- Day One: Chazal tell us to be silent.
- Day Two: Chazal tell us to blow.

Shabbos does not create the Avraham/Yitzchak pattern; it intensifies it. Regarding our actual shofar avodah, this year both days become an exercise in emunas chachamim.

5. Rosh Hashanah 29b — Why Today Was Silent

The Gemara discusses זכרון תרועה and, יום תרועה but concludes that the Torah itself did not prohibit shofar blowing on Shabbos:

חכמה ואינה מלאכה

"It is a skill and not a prohibited melachah."

מדאורייתא מישרא שרי ורבנן הוא דגזור ביה

"By Torah law it is permitted; it was the Sages who enacted a decree."

Rabbah explains:

הכל חייבין בתקיעת שופר ואין הכל בקיאים בתקיעת שופר גזירה שמא יטלנו בידו וילך אצל הבקי ללמוד ויעבירו ארבע אמות ברשות הרבים

"Everyone is obligated in shofar, but not everyone is expert. The Sages decreed lest one take it to an expert to learn and carry it

four amos in a public domain."

6. How Can Chazal Direct Nonperformance? — Yevamos 90b

Regarding shofar and lulav on Shabbos:

שב ואל תעשה שאני

"Refraining from action is different."

7. The Authority of Torah Shebe'al Peh

Rambam, Hilchos Mamrim 1:1

בית דין הגדול שבירושלים הם עיקר תורה שבעל פה והם עמודי ההוראה ומהם חק ומשפט יוצא לכל ישראל

“The Great Beis Din in Yerushalayim is the foundation of Torah Shebe’al Peh and the pillars of halachic instruction; from them

statute and judgment go forth to all Israel.”

Devarim 17:11

על פי התורה אשר יורוך לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל

“Act according to the Torah they instruct you... do not depart from what they tell you, right or left.”

8. How Can We Say **וצונו Tomorrow?** — Shabbos 23a

והיכן צונו רב אויא אמר מלא תסור רב נחמיה אמר שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

“Where did Hashem command us? Rav Avya said: from ‘Do not depart.’ Rav Nechemiah said: from ‘Ask your father and he will

tell you; your elders, and they will say to you.’ ”

***Today Chazal expressed Torah by taking the shofar from our hands.
Tomorrow they will express Torah by placing it back.***

9. Emunas Chachamim and Questions — Pirkei Avos 6:6

בשימוש חכמים בדקדוק חברים ובפלפול התלמידים באמונת חכמים שואל ומשיב

“Through close attendance upon the Sages; careful analysis with colleagues; probing discussion with students... faith in the

Sages... asking and answering.”

The Mishnah places אמונת חכמים in the same list as close study, careful analysis, probing discussion, and asking and answering. Emunas chachamim therefore cannot mean refusing to think. Torah requires us to question honestly and work to understand; it also requires us to receive an answer that did not originate in our own minds.

***Emunas chachamim does not ask us to abandon our minds. It asks us
not to make our own minds the highest authority.***

Yitzchak first asked ואיה השה לעולה Then, after receiving Avraham’s answer, he continued. וילכו שניהם יחדו בלב שוה

10. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Sacks described how the Rebbe directed him away from economics, law, and academic philosophy and toward the rabbinate and the training of rabbis. Years later, before asking whether to accept the position of Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Sacks told his wife Elaine:

“When you ask the Rebbe, you do what he says.”

He presented the reasons for and against. The Rebbe turned Rabbi Sacks's words "Should I?" into "I should." Rabbi Sacks accepted and served as Chief Rabbi for twenty-two years.

This was not a formal halachic ruling binding upon every Jew. Rabbi Sacks and Elaine voluntarily sought personal direction from a Torah leader they trusted and decided before asking that they would follow his answer.

Verified first-person source: Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "Taking the Lead: The Lubavitcher Rebbe", Rabbi Sacks Legacy.

The question was genuine—but so was the willingness to walk after the answer.

11. Torah Entrusted to Us and Our Children — Devarim 29:28

הנסתרות לה' אלקינו והנגלות לנו ולבנינו עד עולם לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת

"The hidden things belong to Hashem our God; the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to perform all the words of this Torah."

12. This Year's Intensified Avodah

The drash delivered a week earlier, on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah, established that years beginning without the first-day shofar have been associated with both tragedy and extraordinary blessing, without giving us a predictive formula.

The reason is hidden; the avodah is revealed.

Tonight's added point is that such a year demands extra emunas chachamim. The missing shofar can remain an absence, or our surrender of it can become a positive zechus.

Both today's silence and tomorrow's sound come to us through Chazal.

Two Opposite Responses to Torah Authority

The Churban — Gittin 56a

As established in the drash delivered on the preceding Shabbos, the year of the destruction of the Second Beis Hamikdash began with the first day of Rosh Hashanah on Shabbos.

The Chachamim said to the biryonim:

ניפוק ונעביד שלמא בהדייהו

"Let us go out and make peace with the Romans."

The biryonim refused and demanded war. The Chachamim warned:

לא מסתייעא מילתא

“It will not succeed.”

The failure was not merely that the biryonim disagreed with rabbanim. They prevented the Chachamim’s course and burned the community’s food stores to force everyone into war; famine followed. Within the Gemara’s narrative, rejecting the judgment of the Chachamim became part of the human road to the Churban. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai later embodied the Chachamim’s alternative through Yavneh and its chachamim.

The Eigel — Shemos 32:26-30

As established in the drash delivered on the preceding Shabbos, the year of the second luchos and the forgiveness granted after the Eigel likewise began with the first day of Rosh Hashanah on Shabbos.

Moshe had already shattered the luchos without receiving a command to do so. Shabbos 87a states:

שבר את הלוחות מאי דריש ומנלן דהסכים הקדוש ברוך הוא על ידו שנאמר אשר שברת ואמר ריש לקיש יישר כחך ששיברת

Moshe acted, מדעתו and Hashem confirmed his judgment.

Moshe called:

מי לה' אלי ויאספו אליו כל בני לוי

“Whoever is for Hashem, come to me”—and all the sons of Levi gathered to him.

Here too, Hashem did not give Moshe a new, situation-specific command to kill these worshippers. Moshe said והיכן אמר ה' אלוקי ישראל כה אמר Rashi asks and answers that Moshe was applying an existing Torah law to this crisis:

זובח לאלהים יחרם

The Levi'im had not heard this ruling directly from Hashem. They received Moshe's halachic judgment, trusted his application of Hashem's Torah, and acted upon it.

Later Moshe praised Levi: כי שמרו אמרתך ובריתך ינצורו After the rebellion was confronted, Moshe ascended to seek atonement: אולי אכפרה בעד חטאתכם

Suggested derush: The Torah does not explicitly say that Levi's obedience alone produced forgiveness. But the sequence suggests that before Moshe could seek kapparah above, there had to be people below who would receive his Torah judgment and defend the covenant.

The biryonim said, “We know better than the Chachamim.” The Levi'im heard Moshe say, מי לה' אלי and stood with him. The calendar does not tell us which year this will be; it asks us which people we will become.

Closing Applications

1. When asking a she'eilah, disclose every relevant fact. 2. Seek understanding after a difficult psak; do not shop for permission. 3. Distinguish a binding psak

from informal advice. 4. Receive Torah faithfully—and make yourself a trustworthy transmitter to the next generation.

In an ordinary year, Avraham's direct command and Yitzchak's received command divide the two days. This year, Yitzchak's emunas chachamim fills them both—silence today and sound tomorrow.

וילכו שניהם יחדו בלב שוה