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TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY
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The Structure of Tekiyot on Rosh Ha-shana

As Chodesh Elul commences we begin our preparations for Yom Ha-din. IY"H the shiurim over the next few weeks will relate to the various mitzvot which we will encounter during the upcoming yamim tovim.

The Ramban in his "Derasha le-Rosh Ha-shana" recounts a certain episode which occurred during the life of his rebbe, Rav Natan (of Trinquetaille, the 13th century Talmudist). Evidently, when the latter traveled to study with the Ritzba, the following incident took place: the ba'al tekiya on Rosh Ha-shana, instead of blowing three blasts for shevarim, blew four. The Ritzba compelled him to repeat all the tekiyot, ruling that a shevarim must consist of precisely three sounds. After the service, the worshippers gathered in front of the synagogue and questioned their Rabbi's ruling. The Ramban addresses this debate, quoting their exchange and offering his opinions.

The crux of the matter appears to be the issue of "hefsek" (break, gap) in tekiyot. Whenever two actions are meant to be adjacent, no interruption is permitted to come between them. For example, the donning of the tefillin shel-rosh must immediately follow the fastening of the shel-yad so that the initial berakha can apply to each. Talking between them destroys this continuity and necessitates the recital of a new berakha. Similarly on Purim, one must listen to an entire uninterrupted reading of the megilla. By talking in the middle, one creates a hefsek and invalidates the reading. It is reasonable to suggest that an extra shevarim sound inserted between the original three sounds and the ensuing tekiya constitutes a hefsek and that this lack of continuity disqualifies the series of sounds. Indeed, this logic appears to be the foundation of the Ritzba's decision, and when the Rambam quotes this ruling he initially cites hefsek as the reason.

There are several ways in which this conclusion may be disputed. First and foremost, we must determine whether the concept of hefsek is at all relevant to tekiyot. What exactly is the nature of the series, tekiya-shevarim-tekiya? This sequence can be understood in two distinct ways. On the one hand we might view these sounds as being only loosely associated. They are to be a group of sounds blown in a certain order, part of one bar, but not fully unified as one "note." Alternatively, we might view them as a

series of connected notes with a degree of integration which demands continuity and brooks no interruption.

Presumably, it is this very issue which propels a machloket between Rabanan and R. Yehuda in Sukka (53b) concerning our method of counting these sounds. R. Yehuda considers a sequence of tekiya-teru'a-tekiya or one of tekiya-shevarim-tekiya as a single sound. In contrast, Rabanan list them as three distinct units. (It should be noted that this machloket relates primarily to the shofar blown in the Mikdash during the sacrificial process. We can assume, however, that the same method applies to the shofar sounds of Rosh Ha-shana). In fact, the gemara amplifies this machloket and perceives ramifications well beyond the mere technical issue of the numerical scheme. The gemara concludes that according to R. Yehuda, one must not allow any disruption between the tekiyot and the teru'a or shevarim sandwiched in between them. Since they represent a single note they must be blown one after the other. Based on this position and specifically the gemara's application of it to the pesul (disqualification) of hefsek, one might justify the Ritzba's position which does not allow an extra shevarim sound to intervene between the basic, tri-part shevarim and the tekiya which follows it.

There is, however, one slight problem with this reasoning: by and large, we do not rule according to R. Yehuda. We opt instead for Rabanan's approach which holds that the units, though associated with one another and organized into sets are not fully integrated into one note. After all, our basic obligation of hearing thirty kolot (sounds) on Rosh Ha-shana stems from the counting scheme of Rabanan which labels a set of tekiya-teru'a-tekiya as three separate kolot. This position is further borne out by the halakha cited by the gemara in Rosh Ha-shana (34a) that one may hear the basic nine kolot (the minimal number necessary to fulfill the Biblical mitzva) in separate installments; even if these nine kolot are heard during nine different hours of the day, one has properly fulfilled the mitzva. Evidently, we adopt the position of Rabanan that the set is only loosely affiliated. If so, we can seriously question whether hefsek actually applies within the set of sound. If the sounds are intended to be only loosely affiliated, presumably there is no requirement of continuity and hence no halakha of hefsek.

There does remain, however, a possibility of maintaining that hefsek does apply within a set of three kolot. The gemara in Rosh Ha-shana (34a) describes the modifications to tekiyat shofar enacted by R. Abahu. Ambiguity arose concerning the exact identity of the sound the Torah refers to as "teru'a." It is clearly some sort of cry; what is less certain is whether it is a series of three short groans (what we nowadays call shevarim) or nine staccato bursts (our teru'a). At an early stage the gemara thought that R. Abahu, hoping to cover all bases, implemented three sets of tekiya-shevarim/teru'a-tekiya. By instituting this sequence he would create a series of sounds which would be acceptable regardless of the true identity of "teru'a." Whether the Torah intended "teru'a" to be three short groans between two tekiyot or nine staccato bursts between tekiyot, this set would in either case remain valid. The gemara, however,

questions this formation: If a shevarim is called for, then the subsequent teru'a separates the shevarim from the ensuing tekiya. Similarly, if the Torah had wanted a present-day teru'a (nine quick sounds), the preceding shevarim divides between the teru'a and the initial tekiya. In fact, this arrangement, far from being a perfect solution, is actually flawed according to both options.

Many of the Rishonim scrutinize the gemara's own question: Why are we suddenly concerned with a hefsek between the opening or closing tekiya and the intervening teru'a? After all, we do not rule like R. Yehuda and do not view the set as completely integrated. We even tolerate scheduling the shofar sounds at separate intervals during the course of the day. To answer this question many distinguish between two forms of hefsek in the following manner. Time may indeed elapse between the various sounds of the shofar. However, an interruption of a different or extraneous sound will invalidate the series. Though they are not one note they still constitute a "bar." As a bar of loosely integrated notes they may be scattered but they still must be sequential. If indeed the Torah's "teru'a" is to be our shevarim then the subsequent series of nine staccato bursts interrupts the continuity between that shevarim and the final tekiya. Even Rabanan who do not fully incorporate the series of sounds into one unit require some degree of association.

In light of this distinction between two forms of hefsek and in light of the structural integration of the series **EVEN ACCORDING TO RABANAN**, we may justify the Ritzba's ruling. By adding extra sounds to the shevarim (four instead of three), the ba'al tekiya created a hefsek between the basic shevarim and the closing tekiya. According to R. Yehuda, given his more intense form of integration, any break (even a lag in time) invalidates the series. But even according to Rabanan, the interference of foreign sounds constitutes a hefsek.

The Ramban, however, develops an independent idea to explain the decision of the Ritzba. In examining the issue the Ramban points to one additional factor. If, the ba'al tekiya blew the extra shevarim within the same breath, the integrity of the series is maintained. In this instance the whole shevarim is incorporated into one entity and one need not address the issue of hefsek because there hasn't been an intervening sound. The definition of shevarim is to blow **AT LEAST** three short moans; if more are blown within the same exhalation, they are all considered one shevarim. If, however, the ba'al tekiya blew three moans and then took a breath and blew an additional, one we must view these as **SEPARATE** units of shevarim. The problem, however, is not one of hefsek (creating a prohibited division between the shevarim and the concluding tekiya) but one of **SEDER**. Though we adopt Rabanan's position and don't demand juxtaposition (allowing the sounds to be scattered throughout the day), we do demand a set **ORDER** to the sounds. By adding an extra shevarim we have altered the desired seder. Regardless of any concern for continuity, and independent of the degree of series integration, we still might demand a precise order to the shofar sounds. By

blowing an extra unit of shevarim (designated as such because it is blown in a separate breath), we no longer maintain the order of tekiya, shevarim and then again tekiya. Thus we find that, the Ramban, attempting to defend the position of the Ritzba, isolates a new and distinct factor - preserving the proper sequence of shofar sounds.

METHODOLOGICAL POINTS:

1. Whenever items exist in a series we must inspect their degree of integration. For example we discussed in a previous shiur whether the forty-nine nights of counting the omer are one mitzva or a series of many affiliated mitzvot.
2. Very often, disruptions invalidate a sequence either because of hefsek or because there is a need for a distinct order which is compromised. A primary example of the latter is the special avoda on Yom Kippur. Though we are not familiar with any halakha which disallows the kohen gadol to take a break, we do know that the order of the avoda must be preserved. If the shechita of the sa'ir (goat) precedes that of the par (bull), for instance, the avoda is pasul.

AFTERWORD:

What might the halakha be if someone is mafsik (interrupts) in the middle of the series of three shevarim? What about between shevarim and teru'a?

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