

**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION  
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY  
By: Rav Moshe Taragin**

**Shiur #1: The Impact of Shofar upon Tefilla**

At the center of Rosh Hashana stands the mitzva of shofar. As the gemara in Rosh Hashana (16a) asserts, we sound the horn of a ram so that ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu will recall the merits of Yitzchak at the akeida. The timing and placement of the shofar blowing within tefilla, though, suggests that this mitzva features a unique dynamic with the experience of tefilla. In addition the manner in which tefilla amplifies the latent symbolisms of Shofar also reinforces this themes. The recitation of the pesukim of malkhuyot, zikhronot and shofarot reinforces within tefilla the sense that shofar plays an integral role in the process of tefilla.

Two distinct gemarot affirm the notion that shofar must be seen as an ingredient of tefilla. The gemara in Rosh Hashana (26a) cites a debate whether the horn of a cow may be used for shofar. One reason suggested by the gemara for the stringent view argues that a cow's horn invokes memories of the egel, and "ein kateigor na'aseh saneigor" (literally, a prosecutor can't/shouldn't serve as defender; meaning, we don't want to evoke memories of our sins at a time when we seek forgiveness). As the gemara inquires about this principle of ein kateigor, it becomes clear that it applies only to Beit ha-Mikdash ceremonies performed in the kodesh ha-kodashim on Yom Kippur. Its application to shofar, therefore, seems questionable. To this the gemara responds: 'Keivan d'le-zikaron hu ke-bifnim dami' - since the purpose of shofar is to enable 'zikaron' (literally, "remembrance," a term often associated with tefilla), we consider it a ritual executed inside the kodesh ha-kodashim. This gemara, emphasizing the zikaron element of shofar, establishes a clear tefilla-oriented function of shofar.

A second gemara which underscores this dynamic is located later in Masekhet Rosh Hashana (26b). There we find a debate between the Tana Kama of the mishna and Rabbi Levi in the beraita whether a straight or winding shofar should be employed for the teki'ot of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur (during yovel) and ta'anit. The gemara traces this question concerning the shape of the shofar to a more fundamental question regarding the nature of tefilla during these occasions. Should our tefillot be straight and direct, with our eyes pinned upward toward shamayim, or

should they be contorted, winding tefillot with our faces plunged toward the ground (possibly as a sign of humility). Our preference concerning the form of tefilla will determine the corresponding shape of the shofar. By aligning the shape of a shofar with the format of tefilla, the gemara affirms the interaction between the two.

These two gemarot thus establish the presence of some interaction. A third gemara articulates the function shofar plays and the impact upon tefilla. As stated earlier, the tana'im debate the validity of a cow's horn for shofar. According to the simple reading of the mishna, the Tana Kama disqualifies a cow's horn because it is referred to by the Torah as 'keren' rather than shofar. Rabbi Yossi, who validates a cow's horn, searches for a pasuk which refers to a cow's horn as 'shofar.' In Tehillim perek 69, David ha-Melekh promises Hashem that if he will be saved from his enemies, David will praise and say Hallel. He pledges that his praise will be superior to 'shor par.' The literal reading is that his praise will surpass even a korban offered from a shor (ox) or par (cow). Rabbi Yossi, though, interprets these two words as a conjugation which should be read shor par = shofar. Namely, his praise will surpass even the worship facilitated by shofar. Rabbi Yossi takes this as a somewhat oblique reference to a cow's horn's status as shofar. One message clearly emerges from the gemara: a tefilla or service accompanied by shofar is cast as the highest template of tefilla. Namely, the shofar IMPACTS upon tefilla by improving it. David poses a shofar-oriented tefilla as the paradigm of superior tefillot. What is unclear from this gemara is the exact manner by which a shofar improves or upgrades tefilla.

SUMMARY: We have detected from two gemarot a dynamic between shofar and tefilla. A third gemara articulated the fact that shofar enriches tefilla. The exact nature of this enrichment remains unclear.

One possibility emerges from a Yerushalmi in Ta'anit (2:1) which describes the role of shofar during the tefillot of ta'anit. The gemara cites Rabbi Ya'akov from Rome as explaining that our shofar blowing on fast days calls out to ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu, asking Him to look upon us and have mercy upon us as simple animals. The shofar is thus an attempt to replace a sophisticated and articulate human voice with the more simple and basic bestial one. We acknowledge that, as humans, we might not deserve Hashem's compassion, but we still ask him to provide for us just as He provides for the beasts of the forest.

An interesting halakha in Masekhet Rosh Hashana (27b) might stem from this concept. The gemara disqualifies a reversed shofar - one in which the mouthpiece

was converted into the top and the top was transformed into the mouthpiece. The gemara supplies a derasha to justify this halakha: we require that the shofar be blown "derekh ha-avarato" - in the exact manner in which the shofar existed on the animal (see especially Rashi's comments to this gemara). By demanding an unchanged or natural shofar, the gemara might be expressing this concept, that we seek to blow like animals begging for mercy. A processed or transformed shofar would not convey this animal voice; only a natural or crude shofar will accomplish this task.

We might return to the "ein kateigor" discussion and detect an additional reflection of this principle. Based on the concept of ein kateigor, the gemara sought to invalidate sprinkling cow's blood in the kodesh ha-kodashim. Wouldn't this, the gemara asked, evoke memories of the egel? The gemara responds, 'ho'il de-ishteni ishteni' - since the blood has undergone a transformation, ein kateigor no longer applies. Bringing the cow itself would be problematic; carrying its blood, however, is not, since the blood is not the original cow. Based on this view and the final application of ein kateigor to a cow's horn, we may conclude that the horn is more reflective or evocative of the original cow. Unlike blood, which is 'ishteni' (a different item), the horn is a remnant of the original cow and evokes the egel. This distinction clearly underscores our aforementioned principle that blowing a shofar attempts to recreate the native and primal squeal of an animal. Certain squeals, though effective as tefilla, are graphic reminders of the egel and are thereby disqualified.