

Thoughts on the Concept of Tekias Shofar¹

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And G-d said to Moshe saying. Speak to the Jewish people saying: In the seventh month, on the first of the month, it should be for you a day of rest, a remembrance of the teruah, a holy day. Do not perform any creative labor of work and you shall offer a sacrifice to G-d.

Vayikra 23:23-25

וַיְדַבֵּר ה', אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֵאמֹר: בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד
לַחֹדֶשׁ, יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן--זְכוֹרֹן תְּרוּעָה,
מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ. כָּל-מְלָאכֶת עֲבֹדָה, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ;
וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֹשֶׁה, לַה'.
ויקרא כג:כג-כה

The Torah uses the term “*zichron teruah*” to describe Rosh HaShanah. What does “*zichron teruah*” mean? Rashi writes:

A remembrance of the teruah—mentioning the verses relating to remembrance and to shofar blasts, to remember the binding of Isaac and the ram that was offered in his place.

Rashi, Vayikra 23:24

זכרון תרועה - זכרון פסוקי זכרונות
ופסוקי שופרות, לזכור לכם עקידת
יצחק שקרב תחתיו איל.
רש"י, ויקרא כג:כד

It appears as though Rashi is of the opinion that *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros* are *chiyuvim m'Doraisa* (biblical obligations). This would mean that the obligation on Rosh HaShanah is not only to blow the shofar and to produce a sound, but that the concept of *zichron teruah* requires us to verbalize the concept through the recitation of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros*.

While there is no doubt that the concept of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros* is based on the idea of *zichron teruah*, it is interesting to note that we do not have a similar obligation of a “*zikaron*,” a recitation of those *pesukim* in the Torah that require us to do other mitzvos, such as the mitzvos of lulav or the eating of matzah. This manifests a double *kiyum* (fulfillment) for *zichron teruah*: blowing shofar per se as well as doing it within the framework of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros*.

¹ This article was compiled by R. Benjamin Kelsen, attorney, mediator, rav and dayan in Teaneck, NJ, based on a shiur that Rav Drillman gave in Elul of 1993 to RIETS students. The shiur presented an idea developed by Rav Yosef D. Soloveitchik at a Yarchei Kallah in Boston, 1977, and contains Rav Drillman's own additional insights.

The Ramban, however, citing the Gemara in *Maseches Rosh HaShanah* (34b), disagrees, and states that the recitation of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros* within the context of *tekias shofar*, derived from *zichron teruah*, is only an *asmachta* (hint in the text) and therefore merely rabbinic in nature. The Gemara states that if one has a choice to participate in one of two different services, one where he might hear *tekias shofar* or one where he will definitely hear the *berachos* of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros*, the person is charged to attend the former rather than the latter. We can see from this scenario that the obligation to hear the shofar itself takes precedence over the obligation to hear *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros*. Had both *mitzvos* been *m'Doraisa* there would have been no reason to prefer one option over the other.

The Rav, zt"l cited the *Ha'Eimek She'eilah* who, in defense of Rashi suggests that Rashi, in actuality, is in agreement with the position espoused by the *Geonim Kadmonim* that *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros* are *m'Doraisa* only when they are combined with *tekias shofar*. Should there be no *tekias shofar*, then the recitation of the *pesukim* of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros* are merely *m'Drabbanan*. This is proven by the Gemara cited above. If it is preferable to go to the place where the shofar only might be blown and the *berachos* of *Malchiyos*, *Zichronos* and *Shofros* recited, rather than to go to a place where only the *berachos* of *Malchiyos*, *Zichronos* and *Shofros* are recited without *tekias shofar*, then it must be that the recitation of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros* is *m'Drabbanan*.

Ramban offers a different interpretation of “*zichron teruah*”:

The concept of “*zichron teruah*” is similar to the verse (*Bamidbar* 29:1) “*It shall be a day of teruah for you,*” which means that we should blow the horn on this day and it shall be a remembrance before G-d.

Ramban, Vayikra 23:24

אבל "זכרון תרועה", כמו יום
תרועה יהיה לכם, יאמר שנריע
ביום הזה ויהיה לנו לזכרון לפני
השם.
רמב"ן, ויקרא כג:כד

According to the Ramban, the term “*zichron teruah*” means that “this is the day in which we are remembered by *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* through *teruah* (shofar blasts).” One can further explain that according to the Ramban, the term *zichron teruah* means *zichron* through the carrying out of the *teruah*, while according to Rashi, it means *zichron* of *teruah*, i.e. through the recitation of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros*.

What is the reason for the mitzvah of *tekias shofar*? Why did the Torah not explain the reason behind this mitzvah? Furthermore, asks the Ramban, what is the significance of the *teruah* itself and the idea of “*zichron teruah*” on this day specifically?

Ramban seems to be troubled by this question because in all other cases where we are required to do something as a commemoration, we are told what we are commemorating. However, in the case of Rosh HaShanah there is no such historical event mentioned.

There is a disagreement between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, found in *Maseches Rosh HaShanah* (10b-11a), as to whether the world was created in Nissan or in Tishrei. It is for this reason that in many communities, references such as “*Zeh hayom techilas ma'asecha*, this day is the beginning of Your work” are not included in the *Amidah* of Rosh HaShanah. The Rav, zt"l noted that since, even in such communities, Rosh HaShanah is nonetheless celebrated and the

shofar is blown, the creation of the universe cannot be the event that led to the establishment of Rosh HaShanah.

Ramban answers the question with the following insight:

In explaining this matter based on truth [Ramban uses this term to introduce kabbalistic ideas], it is the teruah that stood for our forefathers and for us as it states (Tehillim 89:16): "Fortunate is the nation that knows the teruah," and is similar to the verse (Yirmiyahu 4:19): "The horn of war." This is because G-d is the "Master of war." If so, "It shall be a day of teruah for you," [means] that it will be a day of teruah for us and therefore, "zichron teruah, a holy day," means that it shall a remembrance through teruah, and therefore a holy day. There was no need to mention shofar because shofar is alluded to in "a day of" and the teruah connected to it. This day is a day of strict judgment through mercy and therefore the Torah uses the word teruah. We have a tradition from our rabbis and the Jewish people can see this dating back to Moshe Rabbeinu that every teruah has a tekiah before and after. Why does the Torah mention teruah and not the tekios at all, not regarding Rosh HaShanah and not regarding Yom Kippur? Because the tekiah is the remembrance, it is the shofar [blast] and the teruah is used by name since [the teruah] is sandwiched between mercy, the tekiah before and after it.

Ramban, Vayikra 23:24

על דרך האמת, תרועה היא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, שנאמר אשרי העם יודעי תרועה, וכענין שכתוב (ירמיה ד יט) תרועת מלחמה, כי השם איש מלחמה. אם כן, "יום תרועה יהיה לכם", שיהיה היום לתרועה לנו, וכן "זכרון תרועה מקרא קדש", שיהיה הזכרון בתרועה, ולפיכך הוא מקרא קודש. ולא הוצרך להזכיר שופר, כי השופר רמז "ביום" והתרועה בו, והנה הוא יום דין ברחמים לא תרועת מלחמה. ומפני זה הזכיר הכתוב התרועה, שכבר קבלה ביד רבותינו וכל ישראל רואים עד משה רבינו שכל תרועה פשוטה לפניו ופשוטה לאחריה. ולמה יזכיר הכתוב תרועה ולא יזכיר התקיעות כלל לא בראש השנה ולא ביום הכפורים, אבל התקיעה היא הזכרון והוא השופר, והתרועה כשמה, ומפני שהיא כלולה מן הרחמים תקיעה לפניו ולאחריה
רמב"ן, ויקרא כג:כד

The Rav felt that perhaps the Ramban, when he says, "In explaining this matter based on truth it is the *teruah* that stood for our forefathers and for us...", was following in the footsteps of the Rambam in *Hilchos Chovel u'Mazik* (1:6) where the latter formulates the idea that there are certain laws that we have accepted simply based upon the *Mesorah* (tradition). The Ramban applies this to Rosh Hashanah in stating that throughout the generations, Rosh HaShanah has been singled out as a unique and extraordinary day in the year. It is with this understanding that The Rav explained the Ramban's position as to the meaning of the concept of "*zichron teruah*."

We find Rosh HaShanah as a day of *din* in the following example: The Gemara in *Maseches Eirchin* (10b), tells us that the *Malochei HaShareis* asked the *Ribbono Shel Olam* for the reason that *Klal Yisroel* does not recite Hallel on Rosh HaShanah. The *Ribbono Shel Olam* answered that it is not appropriate that when the *Melech Malchei HaMelochim* is sitting on the "throne" of *din* (judgment) and the books of the living and dead are open before Him that *Bnei Yisroel* should recite the Hallel. From here we can clearly see that the main feature of Rosh HaShanah is that of *din*.

The Rav, zt"l pointed out that the use of the phrase "*Melech yosheiv al kisei din*, the King Who sits on the throne of judgment" teaches us that the *malchus* of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is expressed through the characteristic of *din* which manifests itself on Rosh HaShanah. Additionally, *malchus* is the medium through which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* relates His presence and omnipotence to

the entire universe. It is quite fascinating that the same laws, both the physical and metaphysical, apply to all creation. This form of *din* is referred to as the “*ratzon HaKadmon*” which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has implanted in each and every one of His creations with the sole purpose of extolling the glory of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. The *ratzon HaKadmon* is completely in control of the dynamics of the universe and is the ultimate manifestation of the concept of *din*.

How do we recognize this attribute of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*? If we look, for example, at the unchangeable rising of the sun in the east and setting in the west, the inviolability of nature’s law, is a proof to the concept of *din*. Therefore, if one accepts this opinion that on Rosh HaShanah the world was created, then Rosh HaShanah is truly the ultimate *yom din*.

Yet how do we know that *malchus* is *din*? We have the concept of *teruas milchomah*, the sounding of the shofar in times of war. “*Teruah*” in Hebrew means not only a certain unique sound. It also connotes to break, as the navi Yishayahu says “*roah hisroa’ah ha’aretz, por hisporerah ha’aretz*” (24:19), after the Earth quaked, something broke to pieces. *Teruah* is associated with breakage and damage; for example, we find the people of Sodom threatened to do damage (*nara*) to Lot for not turning over his guests to them (Bereishis 19:9).

Rosh HaShanah, as mentioned above, is a day of absolute *din*. It is the day when all creations pass before Hashem in judgment, with no exceptions. It is a day exclusively of *din*, during which there is no room for *selichah u’mechilah* (forgiveness). As we recite in *UNissaneh Tokef*, even the angels are frightened of the power of *din* on Rosh HaShanah. The *teruah* of *milchomah* indicates that the *Ribbono Shel Olam* should be seen this day as *Hashem Ish Milchomah*. Rosh HaShanah is a day of destruction. If G-d were to exact true *din* from all creation on Rosh HaShanah, as the day demands, no one would be found righteous before Him on this day, and that implies doom and complete destruction. This is why the *Zohar*, *Parshas Pinchas*, as well as later Chassidic works describe Rosh HaShanah, particularly the first part of the day prior to the sounding of the shofar, as *takifa dina*, the time when unswerving *din* rules. The second day of Rosh HaShanah is described as *chulshah dina*, the period when the attribute of *din* is lessened.

The Rav, zt”l recounted that on the first night of Rosh HaShanah through the following morning it was impossible to talk to his great-grandfather and namesake, the great Gaon, HaRav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, the *Bais HaLevi*, as he was in a depressed mood and incapable of communicating. This was because of the fear of the attribute of *din* that characterized Rosh HaShanah until the sounding of the shofar. From here we can see that the *eimas hadin* (fear of judgment) of Rosh HaShanah was so significant that it reached even to the Misnagdim!

In contrast to the above, the *malchus* of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* on Rosh HaShanah is reflected not only within nature but also through *Knesses Yisroel*. *Knesses Yisroel* reflects the sphere of *malchus*. The Ramban notes in *Parshas Chayei Sarah* (24:1) that *Knesses Yisrael* reflects the Divine glory of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, the *malchus* of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Though clearly *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* can and does reveal Himself through nature, he also can reveal His *malchus* through His Chosen People, *Knesses Yisrael*, as *Malchuso b’khal adaso* (His kingdom is expressed through His congregation). It is this which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* promised Avrohom Avinu and that Avrohom would command his succeeding generations—to keep the ways of Hashem. By keeping the mitzvos Hashem, *Knesses Yisrael* reflects the *sefirah shel Malchus b’khal adaso*.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu reveals Himself to the world through two different means:

1. Through *Malchuso b'soch olamo*, the universe itself and its exacting laws, through the unswerving aspect of *din*. Such a universe does not tolerate deviation, there is no *selichah u'mechilah*;
2. Through the aspect of *Malchuso b'khal adaso*, through the special relationship between the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and *Klal Yisroel* that is apparent to the other nations of the world when *Klal Yisroel* does the *ratzon Hashem* (the will of G-d). *Selichah u'mechilah* makes sense in this medium because of the unique relationship that *Klal Yisroel* enjoys with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

In order that Rosh HaShanah be a day when transgressions are overlooked, the attribute of *Hashem Ish Milchomah*, of *teruas milchomah*, that symbolizes complete *din* and *Malchus HaOlam Shel HaKadosh Baruch Hu* at the beginning of Rosh HaShanah, must be transformed by *Bnei Yisroel* into *Malchuso b'khal adaso*. On Rosh HaShanah, each Jew should say that from now on, he will mend his ways and improve his actions to such an extent that he will command the respect of others and the *Malchus Shomayim* will be reflected in his actions and his behavior. In fact, the Rambam includes this as the core of *teshuvah* when he describes the shofar as representing *teshuvah*.

The concept of *Malchuso b'khal adaso* allows *Bnei Yisroel* to transform the *teruah* from a destructive sound of war into a sound that shows the friendship and love between *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and *Knesses Yisroel*. The root of the word “רעה” means “friend,” as *Elokim haroeh osi me'odi*, G-d who has been my shepherd (Breishis 48:15, see the Ramban ad loc.). This, indeed, is the *teruah* of “*u'teruas Melech bo*, the blast for the King is among them” (Bamidbar 23:21) mentioned in the verses of the *Malchiyos* blessing. This connotes the closeness and intimacy between the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and *Bnei Yisroel* and is proof that we are privileged to have *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* as a friend. This is not *din*, but rather *rachamim*, mercy.

Rosh HaShanah starts as a *yom din*. On the night of Rosh HaShanah when we say “*yom teruah*” in Kiddush, we are describing the characteristic of the ultimate Day of Judgment, a day of doom and destruction. By contrast, however, in the Kiddush of the second night of Rosh HaShanah, *yom teruah*, takes on a different meaning, that of *teruas Melech bo*, the close friendship between the King and His subjects.

We find in the *piyut* of *l'Keil Orech Din* the description of the utter fear that true *din* inspires in creation. At this point, *teruah* connotes destruction. The job of the shofar is to change the semantics of *teruah* from destruction to the friendship of *HaElokim haroeh osi me'odi*. The verses of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofros* also describe this relationship. For example, in *malchiyos*, we recite the verse of *u'teruas Melech bo*. The shofar, when used as an instrument of proclamation, can announce both destruction as well as redemption as it will be used to announce the coming of Moshiach and the ultimate redemption of *Bnei Yisroel*. The shofar must change the *teruah* from *l'heira*, to destroy, to *l'hisroa*, to befriend.

When the Ramban says that it is the *teruah* that has sustained our forefathers throughout the generations, he means that *teruah* reflects the ability of *Bnei Yisroel* to take the *teruah* of *Malchuso b'soch Olamo*, that cannot be reconciled with *salachti*, and turn it into the *Malchuso b'khal adaso*

that is consistent with *salachti*. As the Ramban points out, the *pasuk* we recite after *tekias shofar*, “*Ashrei ha’am yodei teruah*, blessed is the nation that knows *teruah*” (Tehillim 89), places emphasis on the *yodei teruah*: those who love Your name with the *sefirah* of *malchus* as *Malchuso b’khal adaso*, the Jewish People. The Ramban interprets the word *yodei* as meaning loving, similar to (Bereishis 4:1), “*Ve HaAdam yada es Chava ishto*, Adam ‘knew’ his wife Chava.” The term “*yodei shemehah v’lomdei Torasecha*, those who know Your name and learn Your Torah,” connotes the concept of those who love Your name rather than those who know Your name.

The Midrash, *Vayikra Rabbah, Emor* (29:4) asks the following question regarding the *pasuk* “*Ashrei ha’am yodei teruah*”: don’t the other nations of the world know how to make the sound of the *teruah*? Why are *Bnei Yisroel* considered unique in this respect? Perhaps the Midrash is focusing on the unique ability of *Bnei Yisroel* to identify with the special *sefirah* of *malchus* and to reflect the glory of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and His love for all creation. The obligation of the Jew is to keep the Torah and mitzvos and by doing so, identify with the *teruah* of *yom teruah yihye lachem*, to transform the day from one of cosmic *malchus* that has no room for forgiveness into a day of *Malchuso b’khal adaso*, a day of friendship and love between *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and His people. Forgiveness on this day is fully consistent between those who love each other.

The Ramban teaches that *zichron teruah mikra kodesh* means that the *zichron* should take place through the sound of the *teruah*. The Ramban does not interpret *zichron* as remembering. Rather he explains it in terms of being “fond” of one another: As the *pasuk* (Yirmiyahu 31:19) states, “*HaBein yakir li Efraim ... ki midei dabri bo zachor ezkerenu. ... Is Efraim a dear son to me ... as I speak to him I have fond memories.*”

According to the Ramban, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is teaching us that whenever He speaks of Efraim, He immediately becomes fond of him. In this context, *zichron teruah* means a day in which *Knesses Yisroel* should manifest its love for the *Ribbono Shel Olam* by proclaiming His *malchus* throughout the world. The face of each Jew should radiate and reflect the majesty of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and His love for His people.

The Ramban states that this is why Rosh Hashanah is a Yom Tov rather than an intense day of fear and the ominous portending of doom. Even though Rosh HaShanah does not commemorate a specific event in Jewish history, it is a metaphysical event that allows *Knesses Yisroel* to identify with the *Ribbono Shel Olam* through the revelation of the sound of the *teruah*. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* desires that His revelation to the world as King should occur through the Jew instead of coming through the general universe. In other words, the sound of the shofar changes the revelation of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* from *Malchuso b’soch olamo* into *Malchuso b’khal adaso*.

The philosophy of the Ramban is pointedly reflected by Rabbi Eliezer HaKalir in the *piyut* found in Shacharis of Rosh HaShanah:

He ascends the throne of judgment amid the sounds of the teruah, causing the earth and its inhabitants to tremble. Through the shofar blasts and the bending of the knee I seek to reconcile him, together with friends in His garden I will enjoy His friendship.

נעלה בדין עלות בתרועה גיא עם
דריה לרועעה. בשופר אפתנו
ובברך כריעה במגנת רעים בגנו
אתרועעה.

The tune used by the *shaliach tzibbur* on the first half of this verse is one of complete fear as he mentions the nature of *Malchuso b'olamo*, where absolute *din* rules. [Note that the different semantics of *teruah*/shofar are used within the *piyut*.] However, the *shaliach tzibbur* concludes the stanza with a tune of joy and confidence reflecting the ability of the shofar to transform the destruction of *lro'a'ah* into *maginas rayim*, the protection of a close group of friends. The beginning of Rosh Hashanah is characterized by the pending destruction feared by those that are alone and dwell in the unprotected valley. The initial *teruah* that is mentioned connotes impending destruction. The shofar provides the key that allows me to persuade Hashem to forgive me and protect me, just as friends protect and comfort each other. [Parenthetically, the Rav noted that the *nussach* of Yamim Noraim interprets the prayers. Simply singing the words cannot convey their true meaning.]

The Ramban continues by saying that the character of the *Yom HaDin*, when accompanied by the shofar, changes from the destruction of war, *teruas milchomah*, to mercy. This is accomplished by surrounding the *teruah* (destruction), with two companions, the *tekiah* before it and the *tekiah* after it. The *tekiah* sound connotes mercy, as the Torah says that when the people are to assemble the *tekiah* should be sounded, not the *teruah*. The *teruah* sound connotes war and a sense of fear. On Rosh HaShanah, we take the *teruah* “prisoner” by surrounding it with the attributes of mercy, the *tekiah* before and after the *teruah*. According to the Zohar this same idea applies to *Akeidas Yitzchok*. Yitzchok is characterized through the attribute of *gevurah*, i.e. the *midas hadin* as seen through the *pasuk* (Bereishis 31:53): “*vayishava Yaakov b'fachad aviv Yitzchok*, Yaakov swore by the Fear of his father Yitzchok.” Avrohom Avinu is the personification of the attribute of *chesed* (kindness), while Yaakov Avinu is the attribute of *tifferes* (splendor). It is these two attributes that bind the *midas hadin* which is represented by Yitzchok Avinu with attributes of mercy similar to the binding of Avrohom with Yitzchak at the *Akeida*. That is why the *pasuk* says *Ashrei ha'am yodei teruah*. We are the only people who are capable of taking the *Malchuso b'olamo*, with all the fear and destruction it represents, and surround it on all sides with the attributes of *chesed* and *tifferes* and turn it into *Malchuso b'khal adaso*, of friendship and love between the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and His people.

Rosh Hashanah, which begins with a sense of fear and trembling, is transformed by the shofar into a day of friendship and mercy. Yom HaKippurim, on the other hand, begins as a day characterized by complete mercy from *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. It is said that Gedolei Yisroel were depressed and withdrawn on Rosh HaShanah, the day characterized by *midas hadin*, while they were in a joyous mood on Yom HaKippurim, the day characterized by the *midas harachamim*.

Some Gedolei Yisrael were of the opinion that the recitation of *piyutim* in Shacharis on Rosh HaShanah should be kept to a minimum in order to get to the *tekias shofar* as quickly as possible and affect the associated changeover in the character of Rosh HaShanah, i.e. from *din* to *rachamim*.

This is the entire philosophy of Rosh HaShanah according to the Ramban. Rosh HaShanah and *din* represent *Malchus Hashem*. *Knesses Yisroel* has the ability to identify with the majesty of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and reflect His greatness and glory through Torah and mitzvos. *Klal Yisroel* has the ability to take the *teruah* and transform it from the context of *l'horah*, to destroy, to one of love and friendship and the *selicha* that is part of such a friendship.