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Rabbi Shmuel Brazil



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RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS NITZAVIM תשפ"ה – ROSH HASHANA

## THE SOUNDS OF THE SHOFAR AND THE AKAIDAH

During the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah we accept upon ourselves Hashem as our King as mentioned in Rosh Hashana 16 - אמרו לפני בראש השנה מלכיות זכרונות ושופרות מלכיות כדי שתמליכוני - עליכם זכרונות כדי שיעלה זכרוניכם לפני לטובה ובמה בשופר

The *gemarah* adds that the reason we blow the shofar of a ram is because it reminds Hashem of the merit of the *Akeidas Yitzchak* and thereby it is deemed as if every individual also was bound as a sacrifice to Hashem.

אמר רבי אבהו למה תוקעין בשופר של איל אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא תקעו לפני בשופר של איל כדי שאזכור לכם עקידת יצחק בן אברהם ומעלה אני עליכם כאילו עקדתם עצמכם לפני

Why is it that the source of the coronation of Hashem as one's king on Rosh Hashanah connects specifically to the *Akaidah*?

The mitzvah of Blowing Shofar requires from the Torah to blow תקיעה תרועה תקיעה three times. What should these three particular sounds mean to us?

We suggest the following interpretation. Avraham was the pillar of *chesed* in the world, in contrast to Yitzchak who personified the pillar of *din* judgment. At the *Akaidah*, Avraham was tested in the *middah* of *yirah*, the opposite extreme *middah* in which he excelled during his lifetime, *chesed*. The command from Hashem was extremely challenging to Avraham from many aspects. Hashem was demanding from him a human sacrifice which that alone was contrary to the belief that he preached to the masses all these years that Hashem despises human sacrifice. Furthermore, the human sacrifice was to be his only son who was the future of *Am Yisrael*. The challenge of this test was further made difficult because to kill is an act of *Middas Hadin* the complete opposite of Avraham's Pillar *Middah* of *Chesed*. However, Avraham's devoted and unflinching dedication to the service of Hashem propelled him to execute his command completely would it not have been that at the very last second he was stopped by a *malach* in the name of Hashem.

Hashem tells Avraham that now after seeing him overpower these very difficult challenges He knows that he is ירא אלקים G-d fearing par excellence. But there is also another aspect that was revealed with this test. A person could be a *Baal Chesed* because he naturally is a good hearted person and he was born that way. Or it could originate from nurturing and *chinuch*. This fundamental is expounded upon by the Alter from Slabodka ztl when analyzing the *zechus* that Lot possessed in order to be saved from the complete destruction of Sodom.

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*Chazal* say it was because when he was asked what relationship Avraham have with Sarah, whether it was his wife or sister like Avraham claimed, he said it was his sister. Had he told the truth they would have killed Avraham and taken his wife to Pharaoh as a King's prize. The Alter asked why wasn't the *chesed* of Lot in his incredible demonstration of the mitzvah of *Hachnasos Orchim* valued and sufficient to merit redemption? After all when the riot crowd of Sodom charged his house to take away his guests with the intention of evil, Lot stood in the doorway and risked his life in order to protect them.

The Alter answered that this great degree to perform of *Hachnasos Orchim* even with *mesiras nefesh* was a learned behavior from his great Rebbi Avraham Avinu which he saw demonstrated in his dwelling constantly. Such a learned conduct doesn't describe the virtuous essence of an individual especially when his life is in danger of being lost. However, the fact that Lot loved money and he was willing to forfeit a large sum from received from the Egyptians if he would have just given the honest information to them that Sarah was really his wife, this was cherished as the merit that came to save his life. It was his willingness to lose a great wealth by not saying the "truth" and it was considered one of Lot's greatest challenges that he overcame.

So too, by the acts of Avraham's *chesed*. One might question, who said that he excelled to become the Pillar of *chesed* because of choice and reached the levels of excellence because he was emulating Hashem's ways. Maybe it was because of his inner born natural good heartedness which then it doesn't make him so virtuous. The proof of Avraham's greatness emerged when at the *Akaidah* test Hashem asked him to do the unthinkable to bring a human sacrifice by slaughtering his only son that he alone was capable of continuing the destiny of Hashem's future nation. By attaining a pinnacle level of *Yirah* of Hashem which he never possessed up until now, and acting with the opposite extreme from his giant *middah* of *chesed*, this reflected that even the *chesed* that he fulfilled during his lifetime was also his own self achievement and not nurtured or natured. Without his true deep dedication and love of Hashem, Avraham would not have been able to overcome this challenge and go completely against his life's teachings and his superior *middah* of *chesed*. This could not be possible if his attribute of *chesed* was only gifted to him from a source other than his own.

So now after the *Akeidah* we find Avraham excelling with two pillars, *chesed ahavah* and *din \ yirah*. Avraham hinted to Yitzchak of this scenario happening when he said to Yitzchak as they reached the top of *Har Hamoriya* their destination, **הנני בני** behold I am ready my son. The word **הנני** seems superfluous. Therefore it is to be interpreted that Avraham was for the last three days processing and perfecting the *madraiga* of Yitzchak's *Yirah* needed in order to fulfill his mission. It incredibly reached the point where he said **הנני בני** behold I am holding at being the *madraigah* of my son.

Let us not forget that during the same time in his spiritual journey to acquire *Middas Hadin*, Avraham also strove to preserve his exemplary Pillar Midda of *chesed* to ensure that it won't be affected nor

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compromised an iota because of his incredible upgrade and *shelaimus* with the extreme opposite *middah* of *yirah*.

With this we can understand the passuk 22,17 *כי ברכ אברהם* and Rashi comments *אחת לאב ואחת לבן* that the double blessing refers to a *berachah* to the father and a *beracha* to the son. Yet the *lashon* is singular as if Hashem was speaking only to Avraham and his two *berachos*? According to our above explanation, in truth, both *berachos* paralleled Avraham's achievements at the *Akaida* for the two *middos* that he perfected. The *Av Middah* was his *chesed* Pillar that he perfected up until now and which was preserved in full form without any compromise. The son *beracha* was a reward for attaining the *madraiga* of Yitzchak who excelled with *yirah* to an extreme *madraiga*.

With this we can also answer the statement of Avraham to Yishmael and Eliezer who accompanied them on the mission "we are going yonder *ונשובה אליכם* we will return to you". However the *passuk* says clearly 22,19 *וישב אברהם אל נעריו* that only Avraham returned and not Yitzchak? The answer is that Avraham was referring to his new acquirement of Yitzchak's *middah* of *yirah* *אתה כי ירא אלקים* the transition of *הנני בני* behold I am my son. I am carrying in me the outstanding Pillar *Middah* of my son as well, and therefore it is understood his usage of the plural "we".

The Radziner Rebbe ztl describes the *avoda* of a Yid during his lifetime by comparing it to an individual who has a canoe with only one oar and he wants to get to the other bank of the river. In order to do so, he must paddle on the right side of the canoe and also on the left. For if the paddling is only on one side exclusively, no matter how strong he paddles he will find himself in circles in the same place. The right side symbolizes *chesed* and *ahava*, the left *din* and *yirah*. To serve Hashem properly one must be the *baal habayis* over his *middos* in order that he will be flexible and be able to switch from *middah* to *middah* by always taking cues from Hashem what *middah* is the right choice. As Rav Tzadok from Lublin wrote in his sefer *Kometz Hamincha* *אות כב*

*אין לאדם לשום התכלית ומכוון לאיזה דבר פרטי רק צופים בכל עת בבניה שבלב לדעת מה רצון השם יתברך באותה עת מה יעשה ישראל. וזה מבני יששכר יודעי בינה לעתים לדעת מה יעשה. וזהו לך מדרך בראשית יב א רצה לומר ממקום שקבעת לך שאתה רוצה לעשות חסד לבריות וכיוצא שלא יהיה לך מקום מוגבל שלך רק אל הארץ אשר אראך שיהיה מקומך ומדורך אשר אראך אני מראה אותך בכל עת ובכל רגע אני מראה אותך זהו ארצי ומקומי שם תדור עב"ד.*

On Rosh Hashana we seek the merit of the *Akaidah* through which we blow shofar and accept Hashem's Kingdom upon ourselves. The way we accept Hashem's kingdom is by bringing awareness of Avraham's *nisayon* and achievements during his final test of completing self - control over his *shelaimus hamiddos* of *chesed* and *din*. We too must strive to be the *baal habos* over our *middos* and not vice versa merely to react to situations without prior contemplation. Sometimes we must be tough and at other times soft, holding our ground or being *mevatair*, being strict upon ourselves and

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in other occasions lenient, all depending upon what is the *ratzon* of the *Melech* at each particular situation.

*Chazal* derive from the shofar blowing of Yom Kippur on *Yovel*, when all Jewish slaves must be set free, that the sounds blown are *tekiah*, a long blast, a *teruah* a broken blast and once again a long blast (repeated three times). The shofar of the ram is used not only to connect Rosh Hashanah with the *Akaidah* merit but also as a directive manual how to accept Hashem's Kingship as Avraham did during his test. The *tekiah* sound corresponds to the *middah* of *chesed* for it is extended and connected אחד אחד Avraham came to the *Akaida* with an exemplary status of the Pillar of *Chesed* and *ahavas* Hashem. At the *Akaida* he reached another completion of a *middah* that of Yizchak, symbolized by the תרועה the broken sound, smaller pieces disconnected from each other אתה יצחק. However, by reaching the *shelaimus* of *yirah* by going against his self earned establishment of *chesed*, it also demonstrated the *shelaimus* of his *Middas Chesed* that was achieved only because of fulfilling the *ratzon* of Hashem to emulate Him and not because of nature or nurture. This represents the second *tekiah* following the *teruah* the revealing of Avraham's *shelaimus* in the *middah* of *chesed* which was not compromised even though he achieved a *shelaimus* in the *middah* of *yirah* at the same time.

The shofar of Rosh Hashanah is a call for every *Yid* to seek liberty (*Yovel*) and not allow himself to be enslaved to any particular *middah* even if it is a **good** and noble one. Being an *eved* to Hashem is the ability to inquire what does Hashem want from me right now and not only what is my good *middah* telling me to do. My Rebbi ztl told us this story more than once about an *Avreich* who was *makpid* to hear *Kerias Megillas Esther* from a *megilla* with a particular number of lines on each page. In order to make that one particular *minyan* in the morning, he warned his wife that as soon as she finishes her early *minyan* she should immediately come home so he wouldn't miss his *minyan*. Their family was composed of a new born baby with five other siblings all under the age of eight. His wife got stuck in a traffic jam and she arrived home forty minutes later. Her husband was not home for he had left to make his *minyan* leaving the family and house in absolute chaos and wreck. All six children were traumatized and hysterical. Do you think for a moment that Hashem desired this *Avreich's chumrah* at the expense of his children's trauma!

The *gemarah* in Taanis 20b says

מיד נכנס רבי אלעזר בן רבי שמעון ודרש לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה ואל יהא קשה כארו ולפיכך זכה קנה ליטול הימנה קולמוס לכתוב בו ספר תורה תפילין

A person should forever be soft and flexible like a reed that can bend in either direction. Therefore it merited to be used as a pen to write the *parshiyos* of *tefillin* and a *sefer* Torah.

Gut Shabbos Kesiva Vechasima Tova  
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