



A Guarantee from HKB”H regarding Rosh HaShanah that Falls on Shabbas

“Yaakov arrived in Shechem Intact” Intact Physically Financially and in His Torah

We are approaching the auspicious two days of Rosh HaShanah 5787. This year the first day falls on Shabbas Kodesh. Thus, it behooves us to focus on the incredible power and authority HKB”H gave to our Torah sages—the authority to annul the mitzvah of blowing the shofar on Rosh HaShanah when it falls on Shabbas. Let us refer to an elucidation in the Gemara of two contradictory texts (R.H. 29b):

“כתוב אחד אומר שבתון זכרון תרועה, וכתוב אחד אומר יום תרועה יהיה לכם,
לא קשיא כאן ביום טוב שחל להיות בשבת, כאן ביום טוב שחל להיות בחול”

One passuk says (Vayikra 23, 24): “A rest day, a remembrance of sounding the teruah.” (Rashi: This implies that the shofar is remembered through the recitation of pesukim but is not actually sounded.) **While another passuk says (Bamidbar 29, 1): “A day of sounding the teruah shall it be for you”** (implying that the shofar is actually blown). **This is not a difficulty. Here (the first passuk), it refers to when the Yom Tov falls on Shabbas; whereas there (the second passuk), it refers to when the Yom Tov falls on a weekday.**

The Gemara goes on to explain that according to Biblical law, the shofar is blown even on a Rosh HaShanah that falls on Shabbas. Chazal, however, decreed to refrain from blowing on Shabbas due to a concern of desecrating the Shabbas. Here is the pertinent text (ibid.): **“דאמר רבה: הכל חייבין בתקיעת שופר, ואין הכל בקיאים בתקיעת שופר, גזירה שמא יטלנו בידו וילך אצל הבקי ללמוד ויעבירונו ד’ אמות ברשות הרבים, והיינו טעמא דלולב, והיינו טעמא דמגילה.”** For

Rabbah said: Everyone is obligated in the shofar-blowing, but everyone is not proficient in shofar-blowing. Therefore, they issued a decree (against blowing on Shabbas), lest one take it (a shofar) in his hand and go to an expert to learn (how to blow), and he will inadvertently transport it four amos in a public domain (reshus harabim). And this is also the reason for (the decree concerning) the lulav and is the reason for the (decree concerning the) megillah. In other words, for this same reason, the sages forbade taking the lulav in hand on a Shabbas that occurs during Succos; and when Purim falls on Shabbas, the megillah is read beforehand, not on Shabbas).

Not Blowing the Shofar at the Beginning of the Year Bodes Misfortune

In view of the fact that we will not be blowing the shofar this year on the first day of Rosh HaShanah because of this rabbinical decree, I would like to present to our esteemed audience a concern and fear raised by many knowledgeable sources. Our sages of blessed memory teach that in any year when the shofar is not sounded at the beginning of the year, it will be sounded at the end of the year on account of sorrow and troubles, chas v’shalom, to inspire Yisrael to perform teshuvah.

Hence, I would like to dedicate this essay to dispelling the misconception that the Jewish people are likely suffer as a consequence of Chazal’s decree. We will focus primarily on the writings of the disciples of the Ba’al Shem

Tov hakadosh, zy”a. On the contrary, there is no greater remedy and benefit to the Jewish people than to abide by the teachings and rulings of Chazal, as we are taught in the Gemara (Kesubos 103a): **“אמר רב הונא, לשון חכמים ברכה, לשון חכמים מרפא”**—**Rav Huna said: The language of the sages teaches berachah; the language of the sages teaches wealth; the language of the sages teaches healing.**

Furthermore, we learn a fundamental principle in the Gemara (B.M. 110a): **“וכי מתקני רבנן מילתא דאתי בה לידי פסידא”**—**would the rabbis institute something that can lead to an unfair loss?** They pose the same question elsewhere (B.B. 38a): **“מתקני רבנן מידי דאתי ביה לידי פסידא”**. In other words, they are emphasizing the fact that the sages would not institute something that would cause a person any sort of loss or obstacle.

We will now begin to shed some light on the subject. As mentioned above, we learn in the Gemara (R.H. 16b): **“ואמר רבי יצחק כל שנה שאין תוקעין לה בתחלתה, מריעין לה בסופה, מאי?”**—**And Rabbi Yitzchak said: Any year in which they do not sound a tekiah in its beginning (i.e., they did not blow shofar on Rosh HaShanah), they will sound a teruah (out of sorrow) at its end. What is the reason? Because the Satan did not become confused.** The Ritva explains that as a result of troubles and misfortune, they will have to fast and sound their shofars at the end of the year. Tosafos cite the Halachos Gedolos that this will not occur due to not blowing shofar on Shabbas but will occur even if it was due to some unavoidable accident.

In other words, Rabbi Yitzchak’s ominous prediction that failure to blow shofar on Rosh HaShanah portends trouble and misfortune is not related to Rosh HaShanah that falls on Shabbas and the decree instituted to prevent desecration of Shabbas; it relates to the failure to blow shofar on Rosh HaShanah due to some unavoidable accident. This accords with the ruling of the renowned possek, the Tur (O.C. 585) citing the Ba’al Halachos Gedolos (as Tosafos did).

Now, we do find Rishonim who disagree with Tosafos. For instance, in the Chiddushei HaRashba (Megillah 16b), he writes that Rabbi Yitzchak’s words only apply to situations of negligence but not to not blowing on account of Shabbas. In fact, he refers to the latter situation as a mitzvah that was done l’shem Shamayim. The Meiri also writes that the troubles and sorrow at the end of the year will only be due to failure to blow on Rosh HaShanah on account of negligence.

Thus, we learn from all of these Rishonim that the prediction of Rabbi Yitzchak regarding a year in which the people failed to blow shofar at its beginning does not apply to failure to blow due to the decree not to blow shofar on Shabbas Kodesh. Furthermore, we can rest assured that a Rabbinical decree will not cause loss or harm; on the contrary, it is associated with berachah, wealth, and healing.

The Exalted Kedushah of Shabbas Provides All the Tikunim of the Shofar

First, let us examine Chazal’s rationale for instituting a decree not to perform the mitzvah of “tekias shofar” on Shabbas out of the concern **“lest he will inadvertently transport it four amos in a reshut harabim.”** So, why didn’t they simply institute that only someone who is an expert and proficient should blow the shofar? Then, there would not be any concern that a layman would go to an expert on Shabbas to learn. This, however, is not the real rationale; there is a deeper, underlying rationale for the decree not to blow shofar on Shabbas. In reality, the kedushah of Shabbas Kodesh is so great and sublime that it is able to accomplish all of the “tikunim”—the effects and corrections—the mitzvah of shofar is designed to accomplish above in the heavenly realm. Nevertheless, Chazal thought it preferable to cloak this deeper rationale within a practical rationale that is pertinent and apparent to everyone.

It appears that we can substantiate this explanation with an explicit source. In Sefer HaRokeiach (201), Rabeinu Elazar Rokeiach, one of the Tosafists writes: **On Shabbas,**

we do not blow because of the decree of Rabbah; also because Shabbas is a sign and Yisrael are protected by it. So, although the Gemara only mentions the rationale of Rabbah—to prevent someone from carrying four amos in the “reshus harabim” on Shabbas—there is another rationale—the exalted status of Shabbas itself.

In the sefer Torah L’shma (436), the Ben Ish Chai explains the matter magnificently:

The rationale of perhaps someone will transport it four amos in the “reshus harabim,” was only mentioned by our rabbis of blessed memory as a simple, obvious explanation for their decree for the majority of Yisrael; so that their decree would be accepted by everyone and would not appear meaningless (or frivolous). But this is not their main rationale. The main reason is because they knew via their “ruach hakodesh” that the “tikun” accomplished by these mitzvos on this day, when this day falls on Shabbas, is accomplished by itself due to the kedushah of Shabbas. Thus, we do not have to actually do it ourselves. Hence, on account of the honor of Shabbas, they instituted not to blow on this day and (similarly) not to take the lulav to illustrate that the “tikun” accomplished by these mitzvos is accomplished automatically due to the kedushah of the Shabbas.

This Is Alluded to in the Passuk “ויבא יעקב שלם”

This deeper rationale is explained at length in the Bnei Yissaschar (Shabbasos 9, 1). He writes that Chazal’s decree to annul the three mitzvos of shofar, lulav, and megillah on Shabbas is alluded to in a passuk related to Yaakov Avinu (Bereishis 33, 18):

“ויבא יעקב שלם.” Undoubtedly, every intelligent person will understand that our sages of blessed memory decreed to annul these mitzvos on the Shabbas day, so that people will not be apt to desecrate it. Nevertheless, it is clear that they definitely would

not have decreed to annul a mitzvas asei that is only practiced occasionally, if they did not know that the power and capacity of the Shabbas would function (produce the desired effect) in its place.

Further on, he writes that **there is not anything that is not alluded to in the Torah. The passuk states that Yaakov and his entire household came שלם (intact). This term is an acronym for שופר לולב מגילה—indicating that these three mitzvos come complete and perfect “to the city of שכם”—which is an acronym for שבת שכלה מלכתא—Shabbas, the bride, the queen. The word “עיר” (city) in this passuk connotes arising. When the kedushah of the Shabbas day arises . . . the actual kedushah of the day functions in place of these three mitzvos and the remedies of the King are not lacking in any way.**

The Victory of Yaakov Avinu over the Guardian Angel of Eisav Is Related to These Three Mitzvos

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to add a spicy tidbit to the sacred insight of the Bnei Yissaschar. We will explain why HKB”H chose to allude to the authority of the sages to annul these three mitzvos on Shabbas specifically in relation to Yaakov Avinu. As we know, Shabbas Kodesh is intimately related to Yaakov. For, we have learned in the Gemara (Shabbas 118a): **כל המענג את השבת נותנין לו נחלה בלי מצרים, שנאמר אז תתענג על ה' והרכבתיך על במתי ארץ והאכלתיך נחלת יעקב אביך.” Whoever delights in the Shabbas is rewarded with a portion without boundaries, as it states (Yeshayah 58, 14): “Then you will delight in Hashem, and I will mount you astride the heights of the world; I will provide you the heritage of your forefather Yaakov.”**

The reason Shabbas is associated specifically with Yaakov Avinu is because Shabbas observance is mentioned for the first time in the Torah in relation to him. Referring back to the aforementioned passuk (Bereishis 33, 18): **“ויבא יעקב שלם”—עיר שכם בבואו מפדן ארם ויחן את פני העיר”**—the Midrash (B.R. 11,

7) teaches that **he entered** (the city) **with the dimming of the sun and established Shabbas boundaries while it was still day**. This explains beautifully why HKB”H alluded this to us specifically in reference to Yaakov Avinu with the passuk: “**ויבא יעקב שלם עיר שכם**”. It is because Yaakov Avinu arrived with his entire household **של”ם**—with the three mitzvos of **שופר לולב מגילה** intact, complete, and perfect; because he arrived in the city of Shechem—**עיר שכם**—with the **arising** of the kedushah of **מלכתא כלה שבת**, without having to perform any action.

With the utmost reverence, I would like to add a precious point to this explanation. Since our blessed sages annulled these three mitzvos when they occur on Shabbas, a Jew is liable to be overwhelmed with fear that this will empower the Satan to prosecute us at the end of the year and to cause us pain and suffering. Therefore, HKB”H juxtaposed the momentous victory of Yaakov Avinu over Eisav’s ministering angel with the fact the he arrived “**שלם עיר שכם**”. He intended to teach us that just as the Satan could not defeat Yaakov, so, too, the Satan has no grounds to prosecute us for the mitzvos of **שופר לולב מגילה** alluded to by the term **של”ם**, which we did not actually perform on the day of **מלכתא כלה שבת** alluded to by the name **שכ”ם**.

We can now rejoice and rest assured that although the first day of Rosh HaShanah this year falls on Shabbas Kodesh, and we will not blow shofar in accordance with the decree of Chazal, we need not be concerned. We will proceed to perform our sacred duty of establishing HKB”H as King of the Universe; we will be inspired to perform teshuvah, utter heartfelt, meaningful tefilos, and give tzedakah to atone for all of our wrongdoings and spiritual shortcomings. After all, HKB”H assured us in His Torah: “**ויבא יעקב שלם עיר שכם**”—that the exalted day of **שבת כלה מלכתא** provides all the “tikunim” of the three mitzvos of **shofar, lulav, and megillah**. In this merit, HKB”H will keep His promise that just like Yaakov Avinu, we will arrive **intact physically, intact financially, and intact in His Torah** (Rashi).

The Shofar Transforms the Satan into a Force for Good

It now gives me immense pleasure to explain the awesome capacity of Shabbas Kodesh to fulfill the role of the mitzvah of “tekias shofar” in lieu of actually blowing shofar. We learned above that the blowing of the shofar causes the Satan to be confused. Therefore, when the shofar is not blown at the beginning of the year on Rosh HaShanah, it portends trouble and sorrow at the end of the year.

Concerning this phenomenon, the Tur (ibid.) writes something fascinating: **רמז לדבר, אין שטן ואין פגע רע ראשי** “**רמז לדבר, אין שטן ואין פגע רע**” By dint of a “remez,” he writes that the blowing of the shofar prevents the Satan from prosecuting. For, the word “**שופר**” is an acronym for **שטן ואין פגע רע** (אין)—implying that in the presence of the shofar, there are no deleterious consequences or harmful forces, such as the Satan. The Taz (ibid. 7), however, questions this interpretation. After all the word “**שופר**” is an acronym for **שטן ואין פגע רע**—i.e., there is no “aleph” in shofar, so the first word “אין” mentioned by the Tur is absent (I wrote it in parentheses and underlined it above). As such, it implies the opposite, chas v’shalom; it implies that there is a Satan. So, why does the Tur presume to add the word “אין” and expound: “**אין שטן ואין פגע רע**”?

The Taz justifies the exposition of the Tur based on a Midrash that teaches that on Rosh HaShanah, the Satan himself presents the merits of Yisrael and reports that they are a nation of malachim. Hence, the Tur interprets the term “**שופר**” as he did. The Satan is, indeed, present, but it no longer poses any danger, because it itself has been transformed into a force for good. Thus, it is as if it is not there, and it is correct to say “**אין שטן**”.

We can deduce from this that the function of blowing the shofar is to transform the Satan into an advocate presenting the merits of Yisrael to the Almighty. And this, in fact, is alluded to by the word **שופר**—**שטן ואין פגע רע**—there is a Satan, but it no longer causes any harm. Clearly,

this goes hand-in-hand with the teaching in the Midrash (V.R. 29, 3):

Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Nachman opened with the following passuk (Tehillim 47, 6): “Elokim has ascended with the sound of ‘teruah’; Havaya with the sound of the shofar.” At first, HKB”H occupies His throne of justice, embodying the attribute of din; hence, the passuk initially employs the name “Elokim” (the divine name associated with “midas hadin”). Yet, when Yisrael take their shofars in hand and blow, He vacates the throne of justice and moves over to the throne of mercy; hence, the passuk changes to the name Havaya (the divine name associated with “rachamim”). Full of mercy, He treats them mercifully, transforming “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.” When? In the seventh month.

The Kedushah of Shabbas Is Transformative

Continuing along this sublime path, we will proceed to explain the amazing power of Shabbas Kodesh. It has the capacity to transform the Satan into a good, positive malach and to transform “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.” We will begin with a teaching in the Mishnah (Shabbas 119b): **שני מלאכי השרת מלווין לו לאדם בערב שבת מבית הכנסת לביתו, אחד טוב ואחד רע, וכשבא לביתו ומצא נר דלוק ושולחן ערוך ומטתו מוצעת, מלאך טוב אומר יהי רצון שתהא לשבת אחרת כך, ומלאך רע עונה אמן בעל כרחו.”** **Two ministering angels accompany a person from the Beis Kenesses to his home on erev Shabbas—a good one and a bad one. When he arrives home and finds a candle lit, the table set and his bed arranged, the good angel says: “It should be His will that it should be so on another Shabbas.” The bad angel is forced to answer: “Amen.”** The Mateh Moshe explains that the bad malach that accompanies a person home on erev Shabbas is the “samech-mem.” As we know, the “samech-mem” is Eisav’s guardian angel who wrestled with Yaakov. As the Midrash Tanchuma explains (Vayishlach 8): **“A man wrestled with him”—this refers to Samael, the guardian angel of Eisav.**

This illustrates for us the incredible power and kedushah of Shabbas, the heritage of Yaakov—“nachlas Yaakov.” It is able to transform a bad malach into a good malach. We can suggest that Yaakov’s name alludes to this fact. For, the gematria of 182) **יעקב** equals two times 91) **מלאך**). In other words, in the merit of Yaakov Avinu, we are privileged to receive the berachos of two malachim on every Shabbas. The good malach bestows the berachah: **“It should be His will that it should be so on another Shabbas.”** And the bad malach is compelled to answer: **“Amen.”**

This enlightens us as to why HKB”H chose to allude to the annulment of “tekias shofar” on Shabbas specifically in relation to Yaakov Avinu with the passuk: **“ויבא יעקב שלם עיר שכם.”** We have learned that the aim of the mitzvah of “tekias shofar” is to transform the Satan into a malach of “rachamim.” Similarly, the kedushah of Shabbas Kodesh—“nachlas Yaakov”—transforms the negative, bad malach into a positive, good malach. Also, just as the shofar alludes to **שטן ואין פוגע רע**; so, too, the Satan, the bad malach, is present on Shabbas, but it is compelled to acquiesce to the berachah of the good malach and answer “Amen.” In essence, it has been transformed into a good malach.

HKB”H Judges Those Who Are Not Worthy on the Second Day of Rosh HaShanah

I would like to conclude this discussion with a wonderful chiddush that Hashem favored me with. Both the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch write (O.C. 428, 1): **Rosh HaShanah is never scheduled on a Sunday (א), Wednesday (ד), or Friday (ו).** The mnemonic is **אד”ו ראש**. According to this rule of the Jewish calendar, the second day of Rosh HaShanah can never fall on Shabbas, since the first day never falls on Friday.

To explain why this is significant, I would like to introduce an intriguing concept Rabeinu Chaim Vital presents in Sha’ar HaKavanos in the name of his mentor the Arizal:

“My teacher, of blessed memory, used to cry a lot during the Rosh HaShanah prayers. . . . He would say that if anyone did not succumb to tears during these days, it was a sign that their neshamah was unworthy and lacking. He would also say that some people were judged on the first day by the stricter standard of **דינא קשיא**, while others were judged on the second day by the more lenient standard of **דינא רפיא**—the Holy One judged them on the second day, because He wanted to show them mercy. He also said that when someone broke into copious tears spontaneously, on his own, it was a sign that he was being judged on high at that moment--whether it was the first day or whether it was the second day.”

Based on this concept, I would like to propose a wonderful chiddush. It for this very same reason that our sages of blessed memory wisely ensured that Rosh HaShanah would never fall on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday in keeping with the mnemonic **“לא אד”ו ראש”**. Thus, it is never possible for the second day of Rosh HaShanah to fall on Shabbas when the shofar is not blown. In other words, we always blow shofar on the day those who are

less worthy are judged by the lenient standard of **דינא רפיא**. This arouses them to perform teshuvah and prompts HKB”H to vacate the throne of “din” and sit down on the throne of “rachamim.” As a result, the entire house of Yisrael is exonerated on Rosh HaShanah, and we all merit a “kesivah va’chasimah tovah”—a good, sweet year full of berachah and salvation.

We will conclude with heartfelt words of encouragement from the divine kabbalist, Rabeinu Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a, the author of Ateret Tzvi on the Zohar hakadosh. David HaMelech said (Tehillim 126, 2): **“אז ימלא שחוק פינו: ולשונו רנה”**—**then our mouth will be filled with laughter.** The word **אז** is composed of the two letters **“aleph”** and **“zayin.”** They allude to Rosh HaShanah, the **“aleph”**—the first day of the year—that falls on **“zayin”**—Shabbas Kodesh, the seventh day of the week. The first letters of the words **“ש’חוק פ’ינו ו’לשונו ר’נה”** can be rearranged to spell **“ר שופ”**. Thus, the passuk alludes to the fact that the joy and laughter of the songs and praises uttered on Shabbas Kodesh are a substitute for the shofar, because they portend **“rachamim”** for Yisrael.



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