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לעשות רצונך
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שע"י "חדר הזדאה" שכונת מנחת יצחק פעיה"ק ירושלם תובב"א - בראשות הרב חיים אהרן בלייער שליט"א

Halochoh compiled by HaRav Chaim Bleier – Translated from the Hebrew edition by R' Zerachya Shicker

Halochoh of a Tekias Shofar

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ליקוטי ופסקי הלכות "חוקי חיים"

ותלמד
"תקפי חיים"
לעשות רצונך
בלבב שלם



שע"י "חדד הוראה" שבגנת מנחת יצחק פעה"ק ירושלם טובב"א - בראשות הרב חיים אהרן בלייער שליט"א

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Please do not read during Davening or Krias Hatorah

Tekias Shofar in Light of the Situation

Ki Savo 5780

192

Watching One's Health, Meticulousness in Halachah

1. We are approaching the special days when Klal Yisroel performs and is immersed in selichos, tefillos, and fulfillment of mitzvos and minhagim. In light of the virus that has spread throughout the world, we face many fundamental changes in our day-to-day lives and, unfortunately, some threats to the quality and manner of our fulfilling the mitzvos and minhagim imparted to us through the generations.
2. This past Pesach, we encountered many difficulties in observing the Yom Tov at a challenging time. We wrote several issues (172-176) with guidance about keeping the halachos and mitzvos in trying times, and we hoped and expected that the situation would get back to normal by the Yamim Nora'im. But Hashem decided otherwise. This is just one of the many examples of recent lessons where Hashem showed us that despite our various preparations and plans, He is the One in charge every day. The reality is that many places in the world are still in the midst of the pandemic.
3. In this type of situation, we regularly encounter various issues that we struggle with. On the one hand, we want – and must – guard ourselves to the best of our ability from danger and endangering others (see Issue 171). On the other hand, we also do not want to compromise our meticulous observance of Torah and mitzvos. We see certain leniencies and heterim publicized by various rabbanim to address this which heavily consider the factor of health and the fear and apprehension of the authorities, while disregarding the importance of keeping halachah. Conversely, we also see rabbanim and community leaders who are careful not to change the smallest aspect of their communities' conduct in matters that do not even pertain to keeping halachah, minhagim, etc. They consequently disregard the obligation to watch one's health and put other people, particularly the elderly and high-risk population, in harm's way, as we've unfortunately seen.
4. Thus, we saw a need to continue to discuss several halachos that pertain to the upcoming Yamim Nora'im in light of the situation and to take the middle path: assigning importance to watching our health while at the same time not compromising our meticulous fulfillment of mitzvos, chas veshalom, to whatever extent possible. We do not know the value of each detail and its effect in Shomayim. We will also give recommendations when necessary.

Concern of Spreading the Virus through Tekias Shofar

5. In places where the virus is still spreading and many people are sick, some rabbanim fear the possibility of a baal tokeia who does not know he carries the virus [and therefore shows up...]. As with all wind instruments, particles of vapor and saliva come out of the end of the shofar, and the force of the blowing can spread particles to others, creating an aerosol effect, more than a person just sneezing.
6. **Keeping a distance from the baal tokeia.** The simple precaution is to make a rule that no one may stand next to the baal tokeia during the tekias, and people – especially those standing in the direction of the wide end of the shofar – should keep a greater distance than the standard two meters. The "makrei" should also stand far from the baal tokeia or wear a mask. This avoids clever solutions which compromise all sorts of aspects of minhagim and halachos, as will be explained.
7. **Barrier.** There is also the option to build a barrier of plastic or the like at the side that the shofar faces. E.g., if the shofar's opening faces right [which has significance (מט"א סק"ד)], a plastic barrier can be erected on the baal tokeia's right. The baal tokeia should not be surrounded by barriers, as that is akin to blowing into a pit or barrel and the people outside might hear the shofar's echo ["kol havarah" (ש"ע תקפ"ז ס"א)].

8. **Antibodies.** If possible, a baal tokeia who had the virus, recovered, and has antibodies should be found. Based on the little information we have on this unusual virus, this would present less of a risk from the tekias shofar, despite the fact that we have recently been hearing and seeing people getting sick with the virus a second time, r"l.

Mask over the Shofar

9. Some "clever innovators" suggest covering the wide end of the shofar with a surgical mask fastened with an elastic band so that particles from the baal tokeia's breath or saliva don't come out of the shofar [as if basing their idea on the posuk, "תקנו ונגו... ליום הגנו בכסל... שופר בחדש שופר..."]. They say that the mask does not interfere with or change the shofar's regular sound. Some people in the United States and somewhere in Europe adopted this suggestion as part of their guidelines for the upcoming Yamim Nora'im.
10. **Changes the sound.** As a baal tokeia with many years of experience and after testing this several times with different blasts, we proved that there is definitely a difference in sound. Although it is minor, we do not know precisely what constitutes a "change in sound," so we must be machmir for even a slight change in sound.
11. **Even without a change in sound.** But even if there is no change in sound, it is clear that one is not yotzei his chiyuv to hear the shofar in this manner. If the sound passes through anything other than the shofar itself, whether from the narrow end or the wide end, it is invalid even if there is no change in sound (ש"ע סי תקפ"ז ס"א) – if the additional piece is the same material as the shofar, the issue is that "the Torah says a shofar, not two" (מ"ב שם סק"ט); if it is a different material, the issue is that it must be "a shofar, not a shofar plus something else" (ש"ע הרב שם).
12. Even if just the thickness of the shofar walls at the wide end are covered, e.g., with gold plating, and the inner space that the sound comes through is open as usual, it is posul (ש"ע שם ס"ח) since the shofar has added material and the sound goes through the shofar and the extra bit of gold plating on the sides (ש"ע הרב ס"ח). All the more so when the entire wide end of the shofar is covered, e.g., with a mask, and all the sound passes through the fabric, both at the sides of the shofar's thickness and at the opening. Even if it is just a tiny bit, it is halachically invalid due to the requirement of "a shofar, not a shofar plus something else."
13. **Sealed a hole with a different material.** It is clear that if one would seal a hole in the side of a shofar with a mask and a rubber band, the shofar would be posul even if the sound was unchanged, because it is "the sound of a shofar combined with the sound of something else" (ש"ע סי תקפ"ז ס"ז, ומ"ב סק"ט). Although if one has no other choice, the Mechaber allows using a shofar whose majority is intact and has its original sound even if there is a hole that was sealed with a different material; in this case, where the mask is at the end of the shofar and all the sound passes through it, it is obviously posul according to everyone even if the sound is unchanged, just like when there is a gold plating over the thickness of the wide end, as mentioned above.
14. Thus, in order to fulfill the mitzvah properly, one should not make any change to the actual shofar whatsoever. Someone who blows a shofar with a mask attached to it causes himself and others to forfeit the mitzvah of shofar; says a brachah levatalah; and prevents the Middas Hadin from transforming to Middas Harachamim. One should not follow in their footsteps and claim that this year [5781/2020] the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos and the second day is only derabanan, as all the pesulim that exist on the first day of Rosh Hashanah also exist on the second day (ש"ע סוף סקפ"ח) (מ"ב סי תקפ"ז סוף סקפ"ח).



Pointing the Shofar Downward

15. Some have suggested pointing the shofar downward such that the baal tokeia's breath goes straight toward the ground and does not disperse upward and spread more to other people in shul. However, this should not be done either since there are reasons to specifically point the shofar upward, as will be explained.
16. **עלה אלקים בתרועה**. Lechatchilah there is significance to the shofar facing upward, as the posuk says "עלה אלקים בתרועה" (רוקה, מהר"ל), (רמ"א סי תקפ"ה סי"ב). I.e., the wide end of the shofar should point up, not to the side (מ"ב סק"ט). The shofar itself should also be tilted upward so that its wide end is higher than the narrow end in the baal tokeia's mouth (לבוש, שיעור צ"ק, פמ"ג א"א סק"ה).

Standing Next to the Window

17. Some have suggested that instead of standing next to the bimah as is customary, the baal tokeia should stand next to an open window with the wide end of the shofar facing out the window so that his breath will go outside. This suggestion also has several issues:
18. **Blowing next to the bimah**. The minhag is to blow the shofar by the bimah, where the Torah is leined (רמ"א סי תקפ"ה סי"א), at least for the tekios before Mussaf [the tekios during Mussaf do not need to be done specifically next to the bimah (מ"ב סי תקצ"ב סק"ז)] although some have such a minhag (מטה אפרים סי"ט). Several reasons are given for this: 1. So that the zechus of the Torah will protect us and cause Hashem to consider us positively (מ"ב סק"ג); 2. Since the shofar is blown after Krias HaTorah, it is also done by the bimah (ערוה"ש); 3. The baal tokeia does not stand by his seat out of honor for the tzibbur (לבוש); 4. To remember when we stood at Har Sinai, as the Torah was given to Klal Yisroel with the shofar (כה הדין סק"ז); 5. To blow the shofar in the middle of the shul, not where the chazzan stands, so there are no shailos of hearing an echo (ארחות חיים סי תקפ"ה סי"א); and 6. So that a loud sound will emanate and everyone will hear. This is similar to why the bimah is placed in the middle of the shul – so everyone will hear (ש"ת רבבות אפרים ה"א סי שצ"ג ב).
19. Since there are so many lofty reasons to blow shofar specifically next to the bimah, the current situation is not reason enough to deviate from the universal minhag, as there are other precautions that can be taken (see above, 6-8). We need the shofar to confound the Satan and to act as a lawyer that will annul any accusations against us on the Yom Hadin; we do not take risks that might compromise its success.

Minimizing Tekios

20. Some have suggested either shortening the length of davening to minimize the amount of time spent in a large gathering of people or giving an option of two consecutive minyanim instead of one big minyan. This raises a discussion about how to speed things up and condense, what to omit, and whether to do fewer tekios.
21. **100 blasts**. Although the basic mitzvah of shofar on Rosh Hashanah is fulfilled by hearing 30 blasts (ש"י סי תקצ"ב סי"ב), Chazal decreed that when davening in a tzibbur, additional shofar blasts should be sounded during the tefillah (ש"י סי תקצ"ב סי"א). In addition, the minhag in Klal Yisroel is to hear 100 blasts in total (מ"ב סי תקפ"ז סק"ב). Thus, even if the sections of piyutim and the like are shortened, the universal minhag of sounding 100 blasts should not be compromised by a tzibbur in shul [for an individual, see below (29)]. If it is necessary to condense, the tekios lechumra that some people have the minhag to hear after davening to satisfy all opinions can be minimized. This is especially true for people who are not careful to fulfill all opinions regarding sof zman krias Shema, which occurs daily...

Each Person with His Own Shofar

22. There are places where the minhag is that one baal tokeia blows all the tekios (ש"י סי תקצ"ב סי"ד), because "we tell the one that starts a mitzvah to finish it" (מ"ב סק"ט). However, this is not vital – someone else can blow the tekios during Mussaf. At times, a baal tokeia struggles and can't continue, and as a result another baal tokeia has to take his place. In view of these possibilities, it is worthwhile for every baal tokeia to have his own shofar during these days so that no one needs to use a shofar that another person put his mouth on.

Blowing Shofar for an Individual

23. In light of the current situation, it could be that there will be many people hearing the shofar at home, whether because they are at high risk and do not leave home or because they must be in quarantine etc. Thus, we are compiling several relevant halachos.

When to Do the Tekios

24. **After the first three hours**. Lechatchilah, even an individual hearing the shofar at home should wait until the first three hours of the day have passed, i.e., sof zman krias Shema, so that his tekios are at the same time the tzibbur is up to the tekios (מ"ב סי תקפ"ה סק"ב). There is value in davening when the tzibbur is davening (ש"י סי צ"ג סי"ט), and the mitzvah of shofar is like a tefillah that Hashem should "listen to

the teruah' and hear the sound of the teruah of His nation, Yisroel" (הגר"ז, ברכת רפאל סוף ר"ה סוף סי"ב). Also, during those three hours, Hashem judges His world, and if an individual will blow shofar then, perhaps his judgment will be studied individually (מ"ב תקפ"ט סק"א).

25. **Before Mussaf**. It is best for someone davening alone to hear the tekios before saying Mussaf in order to confound the Satan so that he does not accuse him during his tefillah (רמ"א נ"ב סי תקצ"ב סק"ז). If he is unable to be yotzei his chiyuv of the tekios before Mussaf, he should say Mussaf and then hear the tekios (שם). Hearing the tekios after three hours (previous paragraph) is more important than hearing them before Mussaf.
26. **All day**. Strictly speaking, the tekios can be blown at any time during the day mideoraisa, lechatchilah starting at neitz, which all poskim agree is definitely day, but in a pressing situation from amud hashachar. Although Chazal decreed that the tekios should be blown during the zman of Mussaf, not Shacharis, if one will not be able to hear them after the third hour of the day and has no other choice, he may hear them earlier. Thus, if someone at home will have no one to blow shofar for him later, he may listen to the tekios at the beginning of the morning (ש"י סי תקפ"ה, נ"ב סי"ב).
27. **Bein hashmashos**. Lechatchilah one should hear the tekios before bein hashmashos so that he can say a brochoh. Even so, if he did not hear them before shekiah, he should hear them after shekiah, but without a brochoh due to the rule of "safeik brochos lehakeil" (מ"ב סק"א). Even on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, which is only derabanan, one should listen to the tekios even if it is after shekiah despite the fact that it's a safeik derabanan (משמעות מ"ב ושער הצי"ן) (מ"ב סי ק"ט סק"א).

Tekios During Shmoneh Esrei

28. An individual davening at home should not blow any tekios during Shmoneh Esrei even if he knows how (ש"י סי תקצ"ב סי"ב). Even if he has someone who can blow for him and he will just listen, he should not interrupt Shmoneh Esrei to hear the tekios as the institution of tekios during Shmoneh Esrei was only for a tzibbur (מ"ב סק"ז). He should say "היום הרת עולם" in its regular place. Some say that although the tekios during Shmoneh Esrei were not meant to be done alone, one can pause to blow shofar if he wants (רדב"ז הובא בשע"ת, בני יששכר תשרי מאמר ב אות לז). However, strictly speaking one should not interrupt (חיד"א בברכי יוסף).

Number of Tekios

29. An individual hearing the tekios at home does not need to hear 100 blasts. The minhag is to hear the 30 main ones: 3 tek-sh-ter-tek, 3 tek-sh-tek, and 3 tek-ter-tek (משמעות מ"ב סק"ז).
30. **Two breaths**. The poskim argue whether a shevarim-teruah should be done in one breath or two (ש"י סי תקצ"ב סי"ד) and many people try to satisfy both opinions (58 מש"כ בגליון 58). A man hearing the tekios at home can try to hear the tek-sh-ter-tek done in one breath and in two, but a woman doesn't need to be careful about this.

Who Says the Brochoh?

31. **Man**. If someone who was already yotzei his chiyuv of shofar is being motzi one man or a group of less than ten men in a home, it is best for the listener(s) to personally say both brochos (מ"ב תקפ"ה סק"ה). Still, the general minhag is for the baal tokeia to always be motzi the listener(s) in the brochoh and one should not protest this (שם).
32. **Woman**. If one is blowing shofar for women, he may not say the brochoh for them even bedieved. The Mechaber holds that women do not say any of the brochos themselves either; the Rama holds that they say both brochos themselves (ש"י סי תקפ"ט סי"ז).

Hearing Multiple Tekios Simultaneously

33. There will be many minyanim this year in all sorts of rooms, small groups, outdoor areas, and parks, and there will also be many people blowing shofar for individuals in houses, building lobbies, and stairwells. It could be that there will be many people blowing shofar simultaneously, and this can raise shailos of the validity of the tekios if one hears a shofar blast out of order, as the poskim caution.
34. **Incidentally heard shofar ["misaseik"]**. If one heard a tekiah and is now about to hear a teruah for example, but he first hears a shevarim from a different baal tokeia somewhere else, the poskim argue whether the shevarim he heard is a hefsek and he would need to hear the tekiah again, or whether it is not.
35. The Mechaber holds that it is a hefsek. Even if he did not have in mind to be yotzei with it, it has the status of misaseik, which is a hefsek (ש"י סי תק"צ סי"ה). However, others hold that as long as he did not have in mind to be yotzei with it, it is not a hefsek (מ"א). Thus, if one is about to blow shofar and he hears a different shofar, lechatchilah he should wait until they are done in accordance with the Mechaber's opinion (היי אדם, ביאה"ל שם ד"ה כמתעסק). If it is hard to wait or there are tekios coming from all directions, one can have in mind not to be yotzei with any tekios other than the one he wants to hear now, and then it is not a hefsek (מ"ב סק"ג, נ"ב סי תקפ"ה סק"ז וז).