

Behaalotecha 5785

Rambam, Sefer Ha Mitzvot 59

And that is that He commanded us to blow with trumpets in the Temple during the bringing of the holiday offerings. And that is His, may He be exalted, saying, "And on your joyous occasions and on your festivals [...], you shall blow, etc." (Numbers 10:10). In the explanation (Rosh Hashanah 26b), they said that this commandment (on public fasts) is with the trumpets. And the regulations of this commandment were already explained in the Sifrei, in Rosh Hashanah and in Taanit. And likewise are we commanded to blow with trumpets at times of need and of distress, when we yell out in front of God, may He be exalted. And that is His saying, "When you are at war in your land against an aggressor who attacks you, etc." (Numbers 10:9). (See Parashat Behaalotecha; Mishneh Torah, Fasts 1.)

Rambam, Hilchot Taaniot, :1:2-3

2) This practice is one of the paths of repentance, for when a difficulty arises, and the people cry out [to God] and sound the trumpets, everyone will realize that [the difficulty] occurred because of their evil conduct, as [Jeremiah 5:25] states: "Your sins have turned away [the rains and the harvest climate]." This [realization] will cause the removal of this difficulty.

3) Conversely, should the people fail to cry out [to God] and sound the trumpets, and instead say, "What has happened to us is merely a natural phenomenon and this difficulty is merely a chance occurrence," this is a cruel conception of things, which causes them to remain attached to their wicked deeds. Thus, this time of distress will lead to further distresses.

This is implied by the Torah's statement [Leviticus 26:27-28]: "If you remain indifferent to Me, I will be indifferent to you with a vengeance." The implication of the verse is: When I bring difficulties upon you so that you shall repent and you say it is a chance occurrence, I will add to your [punishment] an expression of vengeance for that indifference [to Divine Providence].

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Behold, it is elucidated that this commandment was performed by the priests, and that it was a constant commandment to them, meaning to say that they would blow every day, and not only on a holiday or the day of the new month. However, I have seen that Rambam wrote (Mishneh Torah, Vessels of the Sanctuary and Those who Serve Therein 3:5), "On all the festivals and on the new moon days, the priests would sound the trumpets and the Levites would sing." It seems from his words that his opinion is that on other days, even the Levites blow the trumpets. And if the priests transgressed this and did not blow at the time of a sacrifice, and so [too,] if they did not blow at a time of trouble, they will have nullified this positive commandment.

Maggid Mishnah, Taaniot 1:4

According to the Rashba, in the Sanctuary there are two: trumpets and shofar. And outside the Temple, it is only one or the other.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 576:1; 12

1) Just as they fast and proclaim for rain, so too, they fast for other troubles, such as the heathens who come to wage war against Israel, or if they impose a tax on them, take land from them, or decree trouble upon them, even if it's a minor mitzvah. These [cities] fast and proclaim, and [others] around them also fast, but they do not proclaim unless the enemy has come and they have blown the shofar to gather for their assistance. Even if they only came to pass through their land, causing no war except against other heathens later on, and those who pass through the land of Israel fast and proclaim.

12) If a city has one of these afflictions, that city fasts, cries out in prayer, supplicates, and blasts the shofar until the affliction passes. All surrounding cities fast but do not blast; they request mercy for them. In all places, there is no fasting, crying out, or blasting on Shabbat or holidays for any affliction besides the affliction of sustenance, wherein we do cry out on Shabbat.

Magen Avraham (Sham)

I am surprised why we do not blow the Shofar in times of trouble, and even if we do not have a public fast, doesn't it tell us in the Torah that we can blow the Shofar without a fast?

