

A Taste of Torah Unacceptable

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

An apostate Jew once detailed to Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner (1749-1821) what had led to his conversion to Christianity. "In an effort to bring a cessation of the constant taunts of the local Gentile population, I joined them, eating and drinking and partying with them, figuring they would relate to me in a more positive manner." Alas, his efforts did not effect the desired change.

"Well," he continued, "I tried to further align myself with them. I even stopped keeping Shabbos, hoping they would accept me."

When this, too, failed, he took the tragic step of converting. "But," he lamented to Rav Chaim, "despite my completely embracing their way of life, I have not been spared their derision."

Rav Chaim responded that his unfortunate situation is expressed in a verse in this week's Torah portion. Moshe spells out in detail what will occur to the Jewish People if they fail to properly observe the Torah and remain loyal to Hashem. One of the travails stated is, "Hashem will lead you... to a nation you never knew... and there you will serve the gods of others - of wood and stone." (Devarim 28:36) Here the Torah details exile among the Gentile nations. Although the commentators

explain that serving gods of the nations refers to working for them, not worshipping them, nonetheless, the verse can be understood as alluding to worship of the foreign gods as well.

The next verse continues, "You will be a source of astonishment, a parable, and a conversation piece, among all the people where Hashem will lead you." (ibid. 37) Based on the understanding that the previous verse is discussing one who joins the religion of the local populace, explained Rav Chaim, this verse is telling us that despite all the efforts of the apostate to assimilate into the host culture, even going so far as to convert to their religion, his efforts will be unsuccessful; he will still be spoken of with disdain and will never be accepted into Gentile society.

Through 2,000 years of exile, and continuing to this day, the Jewish People, despite repeated efforts, have never been accepted as a nation among the nations of the world. On the contrary, it is when we attempt to assimilate that we are most strongly rejected. When we recognize and make the effort to remain distinct from our surroundings, to be G-d's Chosen Nation, then Hashem responds in kind and offers protection from the wiles of our enemies.

Ask the Rabbi Know When to Blow

Aaron Ahuvia wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Rosh Hashanah will soon be with us, and this year we will not be blowing the shofar on the first day because it is Shabbat. I would like to understand

more deeply why we have this custom. Is it because we don't use ritual objects on Shabbat? But we read from the Torah on Shabbat? Or is forbidden like other musical instruments, since if they break you might come to fix them? But how likely is it that a shofar will break?

Stories For The Soul

A Life for a Life

Mustafa and Zaneiba Hardagan were a very tolerant Muslim couple with many Jewish friends, including the Kabilio family. When the Germans occupied Sarajevo during WWII, the Hardagans hid Yossef Kabilio in their own home.

When Yossef was later arrested, Zaneiba risked her life to save him. She bribed the head of the Gestapo to obtain Yossef's release, and he escaped to Italy. After the war, the Kabilios started a new life in Israel, but never forgot their Muslim friends.

Many years later, in 1992, Yugoslavia was in the midst of a bloody civil war. The Hardagan family was in mortal danger because of the numerous bombings in Sarajevo.

Yossef Kabilio's children worked endlessly to save their family's saviors. They obtained special authorization from the prime minister to bring the Hardagan family to Israel, along with members of the Sarajevo Jewish community.

In 1994, the Hardagan family reached Israel. Their daughter Aida had a revelation: She said that she did not feel like a stranger, but rather like she was coming home. She later converted to Judaism.

In the week's Parsha, we recall how the Egyptians oppressed us. We cried out to Hashem and He delivered us from bondage. There are many evil enemies who seek or oppress or destroy us. But wonderful things can happen when good people are devoted, faithful and kind to each other.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

HIGH HOLIDAYS SERIES

Sure, it's a time of Divine Judgment for the coming year. But what's really going on during Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur? What's the significance of the Shofar? How does G-d determine our fate? How does Yom Kippur effect atonement? Get the inside story on the High Holidays at this new series from the Denver Community Kollel.



DONOR APPRECIATION EVENT

The Denver Community Kollel is celebrating its 15th year of bringing Torah to Denver at its annual Donor Appreciation Event. The event will take place at the home of Brad and Dana Licht, 6156 East Powers Ave on September 24 at 7:00 p.m. For more information or to donate, please visit www.denverkollel.org



A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issues, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. The class is held on Tuesdays, 8 p.m. at Aish.

Interpersonal Issues Safeguarding a Lost Object

If the finder took the necessary precautions to safeguard the item, then he is exempt for damage, loss, or theft that occurs while it is in his possession.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

Continued from front

Dear Aaron Ahuvia,

You're right, there's no prohibition against using 'ritual objects' on Shabbat. As you said, we read the Torah scroll on Shabbat.

Is the shofar forbidden on a 'Shabbat Rosh Hashanah' because of the prohibition against musical instruments? That can't be the only reason, and here's why not:

True, on a regular Shabbat, musical instruments - including shofars - are forbidden. But musical instruments are forbidden on Rosh Hashanah, too! So obviously, the mitzva of blowing shofar on Rosh Hashanah is an exception; otherwise, the mitzvah of shofar could never be fulfilled.

Rather, the reason is as follows: Everyone wants to fulfill his obligation to hear the shofar, but not everyone knows how to blow the shofar. Someone might bring his shofar to an expert to learn how, and thereby accidentally desecrate Shabbat by carrying the shofar outside.

Now, back to your original question: What's the difference between blowing a shofar and reading the Torah scroll? Someone might desecrate Shabbat by bringing a Torah scroll to a learned person to read it for him!

One difference is that the mitzva of shofar can be fulfilled alone, whereas the public Torah reading on Shabbat is, well, public: You need ten people to read it. The more people there are, the less likelihood anyone will accidentally transgress Shabbat, because the others will remind him. Also, due to the

extreme holiness and honor of a Torah scroll, a person thinks twice before picking it up and carrying it outside.

I once heard a beautiful idea which can be learned from this Rabbinic decree, an idea especially appropriate for Rosh Hashanah:

One might ask: "How often will it happen that someone forgets it's Shabbat and carries a shofar outside?"

Not very often.

"How learned is the person for whom the Sages made this decree?"

Not necessarily so learned.

"And how Jewish is the community in which this person lives?"

Not too very. There's not even a synagogue where he can go to hear the shofar blowing.

Nevertheless, the Sages of Israel forfeited their own mitzva - sacrificing their own spiritual elevation and that of the entire nation - for the sake of some simple, perhaps unlearned Jew, living far from the hub of any major Jewish community. They cared about him, concerned that he, too, keep Shabbat properly. This highlights the inseparable connection shared by all Jews, that we should care about each other and unite as one people.

As to your question, "How likely is it that a shofar will break?" I don't know, but it so happens that last year on Rosh Hashanah my shofar broke. I fixed it after Rosh Hashanah by soaking it in boiling water until it softened, then repaired it and let it harden!

Reprinted with permission of Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, www.ohr.edu