



Halacha Highlight

Hearing the shofar from an electric speaker

Shulchan Aruch Siman 587 Seif 1
ואם קול הברה שמעו לא יצאו

And if they hear the echo their obligation is not fulfilled

Shulchan Aruch discusses fulfilling the obligation to hear the shofar blasts that are blown in a pit or a cave. Mishnah Berurah (סק"א) explains that in the time of Chazal there were periods when the Jews were not permitted to fulfill mitzvos and they would have to hide in caves and pits to fulfill them. Regarding the mitzvah of shofar this raised a unique issue in that one must hear the actual sound of the shofar to fulfill the mitzvah and one who hears merely the echo of the shofar does not fulfill his obligation. Therefore, Shulchan Aruch rules that those who are standing in the pit or cave together with the one blowing the shofar fulfill their obligation since they will hear the sound of the actual shofar rather than its echo. However, those who are outside of the pit must determine whether they are hearing the sound of the actual shofar or whether they are hearing the shofar's echo.

There is a disagreement amongst the later authorities whether one fulfills the mitzvah if he hears the sound of the shofar via some electronic listening device. Teshuvos Minchas Elazar (ח"יב סי' ע"ב), for example, maintains that hearing the shofar via an electronic listening device is comparable to hearing the echo of the shofar and the mitzvah is not fulfilled. Rav Moshe Feinstein (שו"ת אג"מ או"ח ח"יב סי' ק"ח) disagrees and contends that this is not the same as hearing the sound of an echo. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (שו"ת מנחת שלמה ח"א סי' ט') wrote that there is another reason one cannot fulfill the mitzvah of

Overview

Siman 587 Seif 1:

If one blows the shofar in a pit or a cave, those standing in the pit or cave fulfill the mitzvah. If those outside hear the sound of the shofar they fulfilled the mitzvah but if they heard the echo they did not fulfill the mitzvah. The same is true concerning one who blew into a large barrel, if one heard the shofar he fulfilled the mitzvah but if he heard the echo he did not fulfill the mitzvah.

- ❖ In the pit one does not hear the echo. It is sufficient for just a person's head to be in the pit. (M.B. 3)
- ❖ If one's head is outside the pit it is the same as though he was standing entirely outside of the pit. (M.B. 4)
- ❖ Poskim note that there are numerous factors that affect whether one hears the shofar or the echo and it is up to each person to determine which sound he heard. (M.B. 7)
- ❖ The reason Shulchan Aruch did not distinguish between those standing in or out of the barrel is that it is uncommon for someone to stand in a barrel. Others explain that a barrel produces a stronger echo and even those in the barrel may hear the echo. Therefore, one should repeat the blasts without repeating the beracha. (M.B. 8)

shofar by hearing it via an electronic device. He explained that these devices do not transmit the original sound of the shofar to the listener; they transform the sound into an electric pulse which is subsequently regenerated into sound. Since the sound that the listener hears is an electric recreation of the original sound it is not even an echo of the original sound.