

EVERYBODY IS DOING IT

Background

On Yom Kippur, at the start of the *yovel* year, we are commanded to publicly blow the *shofar*. This marks the culmination of the calendar cycle. When we are on our own land, we are commanded to keep every seventh year as the *shmittah* year, and then, at the completion of seven *shmittos*, to add an additional *shmittah* year – the *yovel*. Not only does the land lay fallow during *yovel*, homesteads return to their original owners, and all Jewish slaves are freed.

The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that the reason the Torah commands us to blow the *shofar* on *yovel* is that freeing a slave is a very difficult *mitzvah*, and the slave owners need *chizuk*. It may well be that a master had a slave for many years and became dependent upon him. He would find it hard to part with his servant. By sounding the *shofar*, we are publicly proclaiming that it is *yovel*, and all Jews will be freeing their slaves. The master will then recognize that throughout the Land of Israel, everyone is freeing their slaves, and so it will be easier for him to free his own slave.

Questions

This statement becomes difficult to understand when we take into account that the slave owner is a businessman and not a teenager. We are dealing with a mature person, faced with a difficult test. What difference does it make to him whether this is a popular *mitzvah* or not? If this *mitzvah* is difficult to do, it is because he is being asked to give up something that he has become attached to and is dependent upon. If that's what makes the *mitzvah* difficult, what difference does it make to him whether there are many other people doing the same or if he is the only person on the planet doing it?

ספר החינוך - מצוה שלא

מצות תקיעת שופר ביום הכיפורים של יובל:

לתקוע בשופר בעשירי בתשרי שהוא יום הכיפורים, שנאמר [ויקרא כ"ה, ט' - י'] והעברת שופר תרועה וגו' ביום הכפורים תעבירו שופר בכל ארצכם וגו' וקראתם דרוור וגו'. וידוע שמצות התקיעה ביום זה היא לפרסם חירות כל עבד עברי, שיצא בן חורין בלי דמים.

To blow the shofar on the tenth of Tishrei, which is Yom Kippur. . . It is known that the reason for blowing the shofar on this day is to publicize the freedom of Jewish slaves, who go free without having to pay.

משרשי המצוה, לפי שידוע כי קול השופר תעורר לב בני אדם אם לשלום אם למלחמה, וענין שלוח העבד שעבד את אדוניו זמן רב הוא קשה מאד בעיני אדוניו, על כן לעורר לב הבריות על הענין ולחזק נפשם ולהזהירם על המצוה בשמעם את קול השופר, בראותם כי דבר הווה הוא בכל הארץ ושהכל עושים כן, נצטוונו על זה, שאין דבר שיחזק לבות בני אדם כמו מעשה הרבים

One of the reasons for the mitzvah is that the sound of the shofar awakens a man's heart, whether to peace or to war. Sending away a slave who worked for his master for a long time is very difficult. Therefore, to strengthen the individual doing this mitzvah, the Torah gave the mitzvah of shofar. People will see that everyone in the land is freeing their slaves, and there is nothing that strengthens man's heart as much as something that is done by the group.