

CHAPTER 6, VERSE 10-11

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

(6, 10)

"And Yehoshua commanded the people stating, ???Do not shout, project your voice, or utter a sound until I tell you to and then do so."

The Jewish people were restricted from expressing even one sound until the moment of victory arrived. Why was this noise so terribly concerning to Yehoshua? What could have gone wrong if they had made some noise? The people's military procedure was certainly no secret to the inhabitants who heard the shofar blasting throughout the encircling of the city.

It seems that Yehoshua's restriction was essential for the Jewish people's realization of their role in the conquest. Although in reality the walls of Yericho did not fall until after the powerful shouting of the people, it was the presence of Hashem that actually caused the fall. As we have learned, the final extended shofar blast indicated the arrival of Hashem to Yericho. After surrounding the city in a series of intervals of seven Hashem's articulation in this war was a forgone conclusion. All that remained was for the people to recognize Hashem and announce His presence.

We now realize that if the Jewish people had expressed excitement any time during this maneuver, it would have reflected their sense of involvement and confidence in the conquest. Yericho was the first city to be conquered and it was imperative that this conquest be seen as the total act of Hashem. The role of the people was merely to recognize Hashem's arrival and possession of the city. The people were therefore severely restricted from anything which would suggest their slightest military involvement in this conquest. Their sole participation was to announce Hashem's arrival as the Total Cause for their conquest of the city.

(6, 11)

"And the ark of Hashem encircled the city one time and they came to the camp and lodged there."

This passage drives home the message reflected above. Although the entire military procedure was recorded above special focus was placed on this singular dimension. We have already learned of the involvement of the people, the kohanim, the ark, the lead and end tribes and the shofar blasts. But the Scriptures specify here the ark's going around the city, implying that nothing else occurred. In addition we notice an interruption in the recounting process. After recording the actual travel of the people, the Scriptures interrupt with Yehoshua's travel instructions restricting them from making a

sound. Then the Scriptures return to the actual travel and single out the travel of the ark.

All of this suggests that, in fact, nothing else occurred outside of the ark's encircling the city. Although the entire nation did accompany the ark, this was merely an expression of honor. Even the kohanim blowing their shofars was but a display of dignity. For this reason the Scriptures interrupt the record of travel and mention Yehoshua's restriction.

Now that we have seen the impressive travel plan of the people we could easily misunderstand the people's role in this war. They do appear as lead figures in the military procedure. Therefore the Scriptures follow immediately with Yehoshua's restriction against any expression of sound. This clearly indicated that nothing was actually occurring outside of Hashem's arrival to the city. For this same reason the Scriptures repeat this singular dimension and record exclusively the ark's encircling the city, reflecting Hashem's total credit for the conquest.

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