



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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ROSH HASHANA

The moments when the *Shofar* is sounded on *Rosh Hashana* are perhaps the most emotionally charged and spiritually significant islands in time of the entire *Yamim Noraim* period. The *Shofar* carries many profound messages; its most familiar, of course, is to remind us of the *Akeidat Yitzchak*—the binding of Isaac—and the ram that took his place as a sacrificial offering. Yet within the *Shofar*'s sounds lie many other layers of meaning as well.

Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neriah zt"l, one of the close students of **Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook zy"a**, edited a beautiful work called *Moadei HaReiah*—a collection of essays, stories, and reflections from the life and teachings of Rav Kook, arranged around the Jewish holidays. In it, he records a particularly powerful story that occurred one *Rosh Hashana* in the late 1920s, a story that captures the multi-tiered inspiration contained within the *Shofar*'s call.

On the eve of *Rosh Hashana*, Rav Kook learned that a particular construction project was nearing completion, and that the builders intended to continue working even on the holy day itself. Saddened by this news, Rav Kook carefully considered how best to respond.

The next morning, he sent one of his *gabbaim* (assistants) to the construction site, carrying a *Shofar*. Rav Kook instructed him not to utter a single harsh word, but simply to stand among the workers and sound the *Shofar*.

The moment those familiar cries rang out, the laborers stopped their work. Many quickly changed their clothes and made their way to the synagogues. Later, the *gabbai* returned and

asked Rav Kook why he had not gone himself—surely the presence of the Chief Rabbi would have carried even more weight. Rav Kook's response, however, revealed the heart of the matter:

Had he gone personally, he explained, he might have caused the workers great embarrassment or shame. As deeply as he was pained by the public desecration of the day, **what pained him even more was the thought that Jews might live through an entire *Rosh Hashana* without hearing the sweet, piercing sound of the *Shofar*.**

Each day in our *Amida*, we pray:

"Sound the great Shofar for our freedom, raise the banner to gather in our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the Earth..."

Rav Gedalia Schorr zt"l, explained this tefila in connection with the very *Shofar* we sound on *Rosh Hashana*. In his *Ohr Gedalyahu*, he writes:

"It is through the experience of the Shofar on Rosh Hashana that every person awakens to the pure spark within their heart. This spark brings us to true freedom—freedom from all that clouds our vision in the here and now. And it is this clarity that will ultimately help usher in the era of perfect freedom, peace, and harmony, heralded by the sounding of the Great Shofar of Mashiach."

Reb Tzadok HaCohen MiLublin zy"a adds that the sounding of the *Shofar* serves as a spiritual bridge—joining the *Shofar* of the past, when we stood together at Sinai, with the Great *Shofar* of the future, when we will greet *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*.

The words of Rav Kook, Rav Gedalia Schorr, and Reb Tzadok HaCohen feel especially profound as we prepare to commemorate *Rosh Hashana* 5786. If these giants understood so deeply how the *Shofar's* sounds could stir the soul, move even the most distant Jew to tears, and bind together our sacred past with the promise of our future—how much more vividly does this message resonate in our own times.

And yet, it is Rav Kook's example that must guide us most: to always build bridges with our brothers and sisters. The *Shofar's* sweet cry reminds us of the beauty of a life of *Torah*—the enrichment, fulfillment, and contentment it brings. It reaches into our hearts and ignites the pure spark within each of us, gently calling us to see beyond the confusion that clouds our vision: of ourselves, of the world, and of each other.

When we hear the *Shofar* this *Rosh Hashana*, may it inspire within us a new yearning for

true freedom—the freedom to leave behind the struggles and challenges of the past year, and the freedom to release whatever grudges or preconceptions we may carry toward family, friends, and neighbors.

And may the *Shofar* we hear this *Rosh Hashana* soon be joined by the Great *Shofar* of our redemption.

***Shana Tova U'Metuka*—warmest wishes for a happy, sweet New Year. ■**

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of her husband, Rabbi Dr Israel Rivkin,
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