

Geulas Yisrael #70

Rosh Hashanah: The sound of Geulah

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Geulah has a distinct sound, and it is the fulminating crack of a heavenly shofar, rumbling at the end of history. One day our human shofars, blown on Rosh Hashanah, will prompt the large and booming shofar which heralds redemption.

Rosh Hashanah is a day to recall the creation of our world, when Hashem reigned supreme, before Man's first disobedience. We also reminisce about the akeidah, when the original covenant with our founding fathers was confirmed through super-human devotion. But, Rosh Hashanah also envisions the future, when Hashem's authority will once again be undisputed, and His presence evident to all Mankind.

This radiant Messianic future is encapsulated on Rosh Hashanah through three redemptive verses recited in the "shofarot" section of Musaf. In general, the "shofarot" section comprising ten pesukim, depicts past moments of revelation signaled by the shofar, such as Har Sinai.

The final three pesukim of this section portray a Messianic redemption which will likewise be announced by a shofar. Each of these three pesukim captures a different "aspect" of geulah, launched by a divine shofar sound. The end-of days shofar is, in reality, a harmony of three redemptive notes.

Coming Home

The most familiar of the three "geulah pesukim" is taken from Yeshaya perek 27, and describes the great shofar or the שופר גדול, which will summon Jews back to their homeland: וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל, וּבָאוּ הָאֲבָדִים בְּאֶרֶץ אַשּׁוּר, וְהַנְּדָחִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיהוָה בְּהַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם. This bellowing shofar will draw Jews from far-off lands such as Ashur and Egypt, back to Yerushalayim. However, after 2000 years of exile in these far-off lands, more than one shofar frequency is necessary, since different types of Jews require very different sounds.

About 90 years ago, on Rosh Hashanah of 5694/1933, Rav Kook, standing amidst the ruins of Hurvah shul in Yerushalayim, enumerated three different types of shofars necessary to summon all Jews back to Israel.

A shofar is very different from typical mitzvah "articles", such as lulav or matzo, in that different options exist, and some types of shofar are more ideal than others. Optimally, a shofar should be harvested from a ram, but if this is unavailable, any animal horn-aside from that of a cow- suffices for a lower grade mitzvah. Even less ideal, is a horn from an animal which was worshipped as an idol. Though there may even be a prohibition against blowing this pagan horn, the mitzvah of shofar is still valid. Namely, there are three halachik "classes" of shofar.

For Rav Kook, metaphorically, these three types of shofar, reflect three different voices awakening Jewish return to Israel. Ideally, Jews are stirred to redemption by an inner religious voice of faith and Torah, and an unquenchable desire for spiritual geulah.

However, many Jews have lost trace of these voices, and instead, are revived by an internal voice of national pride and historical consciousness. For them an intermediate-level shofar awakens identification with Jewish history and Jewish nationhood. They may not hear the ideal religious shofar, but they certainly heed the shofar of nationhood, and they return to Israel.

Finally, there are Jews who, sadly, are deaf to either shofar, and who require a different "shofar-summons" to return home. What possible shofar can awaken them and draw them back to Israel? Unfortunately, only a cruel, shrill, and "foreign" shofar can successfully incite their return. This jarring and vicious shofar is blown by our enemies, and its violent strains force Jews, at some point, to flee back home. The shofar of antisemitism, the lowest-grade shofar, impels Jews who cannot hear the first two shofars, to return to Israel. As Rav Kook spoke, Hitler was blasting this fiendish shofar and, sadly, many didn't make it home in time.

Judgement day

Zecharya (perek 9) speaks of a second shofar which announces a Messianic judgement day. Sinners are punished, and nations which have mercilessly persecuted the people of G-d are humbled.

Hashem defeats our enemies, while protecting us from their apocalyptic fury and aggression. וַיִּקְוֶן עֲלֵיהֶם יְרֵאָה וַיֵּצֵא כַבָּרֶק חֶצְוֹ וַיִּקְוֶן בְּשׁוֹפָר יִתְקַע וְהָלַךְ בְּסַעְרוֹת תִּימָן וְהָלַךְ בְּשׁוֹפָר יִתְקַע וְהָלַךְ בְּסַעְרוֹת תִּימָן Hashem's arrow shoots through the heavens while His shofar proclaims a day of judgement and accounting.

Hashem is compassionate but He is also just. As history ends, and the new Messianic era dawns, the wicked must be punished and evil must be eradicated from the utopian kingdom of Hashem. The doors of teshuva always remain open, but those who stubbornly refuse to repent for crimes against humanity or malicious attacks against Hashem's children must receive punishment.

Each year, all of humanity is judged on Rosh Hashanah, as they pass before Hashem כְּבָנֵי מְרוֹן , one-by-one as sheep. Each year, the shofar announces a day of judgement, but only we are aware of this solemn heavenly event. As surrogates for those who are oblivious to Rosh Hashanah, we annually pray for all of humanity, who do not know to pray for themselves.

One day, though, a heavenly shofar will shatter this ignorance and uncover Hashem's veiled presence. Messianic judgement day isn't vengeful or ruthless, it merely confirms Hashem as the source of justice and truth and launches a world without evil and without suffering. One day the otherworldly shofar will launch a global day of reckoning and a final historical accounting. Until that day, we pray, with our modest shofar, for justice and compassion.

The Shofar and the Pole

Yeshayahu (perek 18) describes yet a third shofar of geulah, one that targets a very different audience. Non-Jews from faraway exotic lands, "crisscrossed by rivers", will observe a flagpole hoisted upon a mountain and will simultaneously, hear the blast of a rattling shofar. They will swiftly travel from these indistinct regions and remote territories to Yerushalayim, to the place of Hashem. As they arrive, they will deliver gifts to the Mikdash.

This third shofar of geulah is not a sound which awakens Jews, nor one which indicts the wicked, but a broadcast which convenes all of humanity back to Hashem. The overwhelming majority of humanity aren't wicked, and they aren't incriminated through the shofar of judgement. They "metaphorically" live in faraway lands,

far from the historical epicenter of Israel. Living on the sidelines, they haven't yet discovered Hashem, but they also, haven't committed crimes. When geulah arrives, they will quickly voyage to Yerushalayim to embrace the "one God" of all reality.

In chapter 47 of Tehillim, Dovid Hamelech describes the scene (in a section we recite seven times prior to shofar-blowing): "All the nations will loudly clap and sing to Hashem in a voice of song כל העמים תקעו כף הריעו לאלקים בקול רנה. After hearing the fulminating shofar in heaven, they will travel to our mountain and blow *their own shofars* to crown the Master of all.

Most of our world has discovered monotheism and conducts dignified lives of meaning and kindness. Modern society has, by and large, afforded Jews with security and acceptance. Most of humanity will not be submitted to the ominous shofar of judgement day, but will be inspired by the majestic shofar of mass assembly in Yerushalayim. They will not be eliminated by divine judgement, but will be galvanized by a world of Messianic clarity. As they coronate Hashem, they will also applaud us for our patience, our perseverance, and for outlasting their persecution. They will congratulate us for annually blowing the shofar they never heard, but whose plaintive sounds caused Hashem to ultimately blow His epic shofar. They will finally recognize that without our simple shofars they never would have heard the grand shofar of redemption.

ויאמר כל אשר נשמה באפו , ה' אלקי ישראל מלך ומלכותו בכל משלה

The melody of redemption is a blend of little shofars and big shofars.