



Step by Step

Rav Sa'adia Gaon says there are 10 thoughts, 10 messages we are supposed to be thinking about as we hear the *shofar*. For example, *malchuyot* – how we're coronating G-d with our *shofar* blows and our *tefilot*, the *shofar* of *Har Sinai*, the *shofar* of *Akeidat Yitzchak*, and finally לעורר תשובה – to arouse us to *teshuva*. The Rambam says in *Hilchot Teshuva* (3:4) “Even though ultimately we blow the *shofar* because G-d commanded us, there is a *remez*, a hint: wake up you who are sleepwalking through life, review your actions, do *teshuva* and recognize G-d.” One final motif Rav Sa'adia Gaon mentions is focusing on the *geula haAtidit* – the future redemption, the time when we will all hear the *Shofar Gadol*.

What exactly is *geula*? What should we be focusing on as we hear the *shofar*? How would we define *geula*, past, present and future?

The first national *geula* was *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. To start that process, G-d came to Moshe at the burning bush, and they have a back and forth in which G-d implores Moshe to go to Mitzrayim and lead *Am Yisrael* to freedom and Moshe continually refuses, until G-d finally becomes angry. Doesn't Moshe want to take Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim? Why all the excuses? Why is he so against the idea?

Moshe finally says, “send with whom you shall send.” What does that mean? Rashi says this is referring to Aharon HaKohen – send the person You would normally send, my older brother Aharon. Pirkei DeRabbi

Eliezer (39) explains it differently. It's not referring to Aharon HaKohen but someone else later on in history. Not he whom You have been accustomed to sending, but he whom You will send. Who is that? “Eliyahu HaNavi,” says Moshe and G-d answers that this is not His plan. “You go to Pharaoh. That man you're referring to, he'll have his time.”

The commentaries explain that redemption is not smooth. You cannot simply climb up the ladder step by step. There are ups and downs, *aliyot* and *yeridot*. Forwards and backwards.

Take Yosef for example. He was sold when he was 17, thrown into jail in Egypt and as a result, *Bnei Yisrael* were forced to slave away in back-breaking labor for hundreds of years. Was this all part of the *geula*?

Yes, because *geula* is not a smooth process.

Moshe saw all of history open in front of him. He didn't only see the *galut* in Mitzrayim, but the entire process. He saw there would be crusades, pogroms, massacres, a Holocaust. He saw everything and he said, “G-d, I don't want to be part of it. Let somebody else do this. Let Eliyahu HaNavi do it, skip straight to the final stage.” Moshe argued with G-d and repeatedly refused Him because he loved *Am Yisrael*. Not because he was insensitive to their plight.

Geula has ups and downs. That's life – both personal and national. Even the symbol of *geula* – *Mashiach* – is

a poor man riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). Why a donkey? Shouldn't it be something more glamorous and majestic?

A donkey doesn't walk on a straight path. It moves forward, stops and sits down. Then it goes backwards. Sideways. That's us too, *Am Yisrael*. As we hear the *shofar*, we recognize it hasn't been a smooth process. We've come and gone and come and gone. And even now, when we have been *zocheh* to return to *Eretz Yisrael* as a nation, the process continues to be rough. There are difficulties and challenges but they are an essential part of the *geula* process.

Thus through our *shofar*, we pray that G-d takes us to the end of this process – where there are only *aliyot*, and *yeridot* are a thing of the past.

Yehi ratzon that this Rosh Hashanah, as we blow the *shofar*, let us remind ourselves that we're almost there. G-d should take away all the *yeridot* so we reach the end of the *geula*, the final stage, when we will be able to enjoy the blessings and abundance of *Mashiach Tzidkanu*, בְּמִהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ.

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