

Gael Grunewald



The Call to Israel

Seeking to raise the morale of the Jewish people in exile, the prophet Yishayahu describes the days when the Children of Israel will return to the Land of Israel: “And in that day, a great ram’s horn shall be sounded, and the strayed who are in the land of Assyria and the expelled who are in the land of Egypt shall come and worship the L-rd on the holy mount, in Jerusalem” (Yishayahu 27:13). This is how the Prophet connects the sound of the *shofar* and the return to the Land of Israel. In Musaf on Rosh Hashanah, we ask: “Our G-d and the G-d of our fathers... blow a great *shofar* for our freedom” and thus we connect the sound of the *shofar* to the national freedom of the people of Israel.

Rabbi Kook, who saw pioneering as a value and a *mitzvah*, explains that Redemption has three *shofarot*: large, medium and small, and on Rosh Hashanah, we specifically ask, “blow the large *shofar* for our freedom.”

The Shulchan Aruch also distinguishes between three shofars. One, the best *shofar* for Rosh Hashanah is from a ram’s horn. Second, if there is no ram’s horn, all *shofars* are kosher. And the third type of *shofar*, from an unclean animal or a non-Jew’s *shofar*, is prohibited but if one blows one of these, he has fulfilled the obligation.

Rabbi Kook compares these three *shofarot* to the three ways of redemption: spiritual *aliyah*, national *aliyah* and *aliyah* out of necessity.

There were generations when *aliyah* to *Eretz Yisrael* was through the great *shofar*, as people from all over the world

looked up to *Eretz Yisrael*, their hearts sought the sanctity of the Land and at great personal sacrifice and risk, they came to an uninhabited land to instigate the redemption with their own hands.

The medium *shofar*, the regular shofar, is the pioneering *shofar*, the natural voice, the national emotion that calls on every Jew anywhere in the world to be part of the State of Israel. Families, lone soldiers, young students see our small country as their national home and leave their country, their homeland and their father’s house, immigrating to *Eretz Yisrael* and realizing their dreams of national belonging.

The third *shofar*, the little *shofar*, is blown only if there is no kosher *shofar*, i.e. when there is no great *shofar*, no longings for the Holy Land and no ordinary *shofar*, the natural desire to connect to the flag and national anthem. Then and only then does the wrong *shofar*, the enemies of Israel, come and blow in our ears the sound that awakens us to redemption.

The *shofar* of an unclean animal sounds the voice of Mashiach and does not give the Jews of the Diaspora respite. Starting with Amalek, through expulsions, riots, the Holocaust and the travails of our own times, this year we have heard the sound of the coronavirus *shofar* that arouses us to the Land of Israel.

The global pandemic is changing our priorities and the sound of this invalid *shofar* coming out of the impure ‘corona beast’ is alerting entire communities around the world. Along with the rise in anti-Semitism, the transition to remote work and distance education, we are

seeing a growing interest in *aliyah* to *Eretz Yisrael*.

As Head of the Rural Growth and Development Division of the World Zionist Organization, I have received dozens of enquiries from various *aliyah* organizations seeking places that can absorb hundreds of families. Entire communities seek to move their lives to the Land of Israel.

This Rosh Hashanah, let us pray with the utmost intention that G-d will blow a great *shofar* for our freedom. Both as individuals and as a whole, may we know how to transcend the here and now and succeed in serving G-d out of the desire to cling to His ways. May we merit to live in a generation in which G-d’s revelation in the world is only through the great *shofar* and not through pandemics and the like.

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