

# HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LIVING

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

Could a Shofar be blown in a city and the people not tremble in fright?! (Amos 3:6)

Rav Sadiah Gaon offered ten different messages of the Shofar. Amongst them is included, 1- A reminder of the Yom HaDin, the day of ultimate judgment. 2- The sound of the Shofar signals the day when the Jewish People will be gathered in again from various lands of exile. 3- The Shofar is portends the time of the revival of the dead. 4- The Shofar is also a haunting reminder of the destruction of the Temple, and when our enemies triumphantly blew Shofar. 5- The Shofar is connected with the near sacrifice of Yitzchok and the ram that was as his replacement. 6- The Shofar reminds us of the corrective words of the Prophets. 7- The Shofar hearkens back to the sounds surrounding the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. 8- The Shofar alerts us that The King is making a decree and this is His warning. 9- The Shofar heralds the presence of the King in the Midst of His coronation. The King is being inaugurated. 10 – The Shofar is meant to inspire fear. About this the Prophet Amos said, "Could a Shofar be blown in a city and the people not tremble in fright?!"

If the Shofar is meant to create an experience of fear, then the question is about how we spend our on this day of awe. We are happily eating and drinking and rejoicing. How can we afford to be so relaxed when there is so much to be serious, real serious about?!

Here are few approaches and I am certain there are many more. In order to have fulfilled our requirement of listening to the Shofar on Rosh HaShana it is necessary that one hears a combination of three sounds. There is a straight sound- Tekiah that is followed by some combination of two or one of a sobbing sound -Shvarim and a staccato –

Truah sound followed once again by the straight Tekiah. The pattern is straight and then broken and then straight.

One hint here, one implied message is that while on the inside a person is shattered and trembling with awe he must still conduct himself outwardly with joy and calmness. This is part of the art of living a normal life with HASHEM deep in hearts while conversing with the world.

I remember that when I was in Yeshiva, one day during the month of Elul I was walking past a Rabbi who noticed my dour and ultra-serious expression. He asked me, "What's wrong?" I answered in on word, "Elul!" He told me, "Elul is for the Rishus HaYachid –the private domain, inside your heart. Your face, however, is the Rishus HaRabbim- the public domain."

I was at a principals' convention and we had the honor of hearing Rabbi Michel Twerski from Milwaukee. I was overawed by his presentation. There was one thing he said just as the lecture was beginning which was like a throwaway line and not his main topic at all. I'm certain it slipped unnoticed beneath the radar but this chunk of wisdom caught my attention big time.

There was so much depth and poetic wisdom in this one subtle phrase. He said in a slow and thoughtful almost hypnotic tone, "People ask me if I get scared before I speak. I have been doing this for more than 50 years. I still get butterflies, but by now the butterflies are flying in formation."

Fear is good. Before speaking I am only afraid if I'm not afraid. That fear cannot be a paralyzing or debilitating fear but rather a fear that is sublimated and channeled into **healthy and productive living.**