

# SHOFAR - PAST AND PRESENT

*by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner*

I find it very difficult to write in the shadow of yesterday's horrific attacks in New York and Washington. This afternoon, I and hundreds of others, gathered in Yerushalayim to donate blood to be sent to help the victims. I will nevertheless try to share a few short thoughts as we move into Rosh Hashanah.

The Ramcha"l writes that the blowing of the shofar strengthens the forces of tov [good] and weakens the forces of ra [evil]. The essence of human history has been the struggle between these two opposing forces.

The sin of Adam Harishon [the first man, Adam] brought about the situation where the lines distinguishing the two became very blurry--tov mixed in with ra and dominated by it.

With the giving of the Torah on Har Sinai, tov gained strength and was released from ra's control. Nevertheless, it did not yet control the ra.

Ultimately, at the time of the Moshiach [Messiah], tov will go through a second stage of strengthening that will bring ra totally under its control. At that point Hashem's rule will be acknowledged and accepted by the entire world.

On Har Sinai [Mount Sinai], the first stage of tov's strengthening; the blast of the shofar was sounded. "The sound of the shofar grew continuously stronger [Shmos 19:19]." The Torah's purpose is to continuously strengthen the forces of tov.

The ultimate victory of tov over ra will also be accompanied by the shofar: "And it shall come to pass on that day, that a great shofar shall be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Ashur and those who were pushed into the land of Mitzrayim [Egypt] will come and will worship Hashem on the holy mountain in Yerushalayim [Yishayahu 27:13]."

Each year marks a further link along this complex chain that extends from Sinai to the ultimate redemption. This new link in the battle between tov and ra is marked each year on Rosh Hashanah by the sounding of the shofar. This shofar reconnects us to the priorities and values of the Torah given with the blast of the shofar on Har Sinai and thereby brings us closer and closer to the shofar of Messianic times.

Every event contains within it a message from Hashem. We can't allow such an earth-shattering event, occurring so close to Rosh Hashanah, to pass without hearing any message.

I certainly am not of the stature to interpret such a cataclysmic event. I will only share with you a thought that came out today in the course of discussions with different students.

It's hard to see ourselves as a link in that chain. We don't seem to be stretching from one point to another. Rather, the world seems to be set on auto-replay. Same values--same priorities--same old, same old. Rosh Hashanas come and go, year after year and the song remains the same.

Suddenly, an event occurs that turns our world upside down. A clear transformation. A completely different link in the chain. We see the world changing, hammering home the realization that we must play a role and contribute to change. The shofar of Rosh Hashanah helps us to focus on the shofar of Matan Torah [the giving of the Torah]--the responsibility to help bring about the world's acceptance of Hashem by further dedicating ourselves to Him and His Torah.

It's not the same. It will never be the same...

May Hashem send the bracha [blessing] of refuah [complete recovery] to the injured and the bracha of nechama [comfort] to those who have lost dear ones.

Wishing you a k'siva v'chasima tova--a year replete with growth and happiness,

Yisroel Ciner

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