

CHIZUK & IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

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When the British Mandatory Forces controlled Eretz Yisrael, blowing the shofar at the Kotel at the conclusion of YK was prohibited lest it antagonize the Arabs. One year, 1930, a courageous Jew blew the shofar at the end of Yom Kippur - and was immediately arrested. The Chief Rabbi, HaRav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook zt"l, when informed, immediately went to the High Commissioner to demand the man's release. The Commissioner said that the man had violated a government decree. Rav Kook said, maybe so, but he did observe a religious commandment. Four hours later the man was released. Today we continue to obey this commandment and as Yom Kippur draws to a close, we eagerly await the sound of the shofar as we sing: L'SHANA HABA BIRUSHALAYIM HABNUYA. Each one thinks of how he can rebuild Jerusalem.

I want to retell a story (found in a Chabad Parsha sheet) concerning the Munkatcher Rebbe and his beloved grandson. Each morning during the month of Elul the Rebbe blew the shofar at the request of his grandson.

The day before Rosh HaShana the grandson pleaded that the shofar be blown again. The Rebbe told him that since it was erev Rosh HaShana the shofar was not to be blown that day. The child was too young to understand and soon started to beg and cry. The Rebbe tried to refuse but his unrestrained love for his grandson led him to relent and to blow the shofar. The next day, Rosh HaShana, the Rebbe rose to speak to the congregation, as was his custom, he began to cry declaring that he had given in to his grandson and had blown the shofar a day too early. With tears in his eyes he then beseeched the Almighty saying: "Millions of your children are crying out to You to blow the great shofar of freedom for our People and gather them to Eretz Yisrael. Please do it now even if it is premature."

On the Yad Vashem website there is a shofar shown which had been fashioned under perilous conditions. The story is one of heroism. A Rabbi at the forced labor camp wanted to hear a shofar but none was available. He asked a young man, Moshe ben Dov Winterter, who worked in a metal workshop to fashion a shofar. He at first refused as he felt it would mean immediate death if he were caught. Later on he acquiesced. Now an attempt had to be made to secure a ram's horn. A guard was bribed and he secretly smuggled in a horn, but,

alas, it was the horn of an ox. After further bribe was offered, a ram's horn was secured. The shofar was then blown and today can be found in Yad Vashem under the caption: "The call of the shofar from the depths of the Holocaust".

I want to share a contemporary story about Yom Kippur. A large group of Hesder students were based at an army base and all wanted to purify themselves in a mikve before Yom Kippur. After all, they were conversant with the Mishna Yoma 8:9 where Rabbi Akiva says "Fortunate are you Israel in front of Whom do you get purified and Who purifies you? Your Father in heaven as it is written", and I will sprinkle pure water upon you and purify you. " And (it says) G-d the mikve of Israel just as the mikve purifies the impure, so, too, G-d purifies Israel." These Hesder soldiers stationed in the Negev wanted to purify themselves in a mikve but the closest one was found in Eilat. Taking the entire group would involve lots of time and much effort. So the Rabbi of the base came up with a local solution. Years before the base commander had built a large fish pond which no longer was in use. It was decided that the pond would become a mikve. Measurements were taken and it was determined that it could hold 40 SEAHs of water (around 150 US gallons). But how do you provide rain water in the Negev?

The Shulchan Aruch provided a solution.

In Yoreh Deah 201:30 we find written that it is permitted to use ice, snow or hail which when melted would not be considered MAYIM SH'UVIM (drawn water - Once water is frozen, the ice is considered a new entity which cannot become TAMEI). A call was immediately made to order the required two tons of ice. It was delivered erev Yom Kippur. Though the sun was blazing, the ice melted slowly and so the first group of soldiers who immersed themselves emerged shivering saying that the Negev mikve was much colder than the Ari mikve in Tzfat.

This story indicates the lengths the IDF was prepared to go to meet the needs of its soldiers.

I would add: Just as immersing the body in the mikve purifies, and just as immersing the mind and soul in the Sh'china purifies, so, too, a Jew immersing himself the AVIRA and K'DUSHA of Eretz Yisrael does the same. Come to live in Israel and one can even live in the town of Mikveh Israel. 🏠🔥

From "Eretz Yisrael and Aliyah in the weekly Parsha". The book can be ordered by calling 052-336-0553 or by ordering it on Amazon