

Rosh Hashanah 1st day - 5762

On a Rosh Hashanah some seventy years ago, at a time of great distress for כלל ישראל, Rav Kook stood in the חורבה shul in the Old City of Jerusalem and delivered - in a tear-choked voice - a דרשה that, I believe, speaks to us, as well.

The halacha, he said, speaks of three kinds of shofar.

The first shofar is the שופר של איל, a shofar made from a ram's horn. לכתחילה, ideally, this is the type of shofar that we should use on ראש השנה, since it connects us back to the עקידת יצחק, when אברהם offered a ram in place of his son, יצחק, and we invoke the merit of the עקידה in our תפילות on Rosh Hashanah and, indeed, the whole year.

That is the first - and best - shofar.

If, however, a שופר של איל is not available, then the halacha allows the use of a shofar that is made from the horn of any kosher animal - except that of a cow. It isn't the ideal shofar, but it is acceptable, and one can make a ברכה on such a shofar, too.

So that is the second shofar.

But what if even such a shofar is not available - what if all one has is a shofar made from a non-kosher animal? In such a case the halacha rules that one blows the shofar even of a non-kosher animal. But one cannot make a ברכה on such a shofar.

That is the third, and least desirable type of shofar.

רבתי, the sound of the shofar is meant to awaken us to teshuvah. It is a clarion call, a siren that breaks through the hum of everyday life and calls to us - in the famous words of the Rambam - עורו ישנים משנתכם ונרדמים מטרדמתכם - wake up from your sleep, from your pre-occupation with things that are fleeting and of no importance. Remember who you are, that you are a Jew, whose mission is to elevate your life and the world around you and infuse them with קדושה; remember your duty to מצוות and תורה; remember your obligations to your fellow-Jew, your connection to ארץ ישראל, your share in עולם הבא that is yours to earn; remember all those things that the world conspires to make you forget.

And just as there is the tangible shofar that we blow today to remind us of these things, there are also other שופרות, the שופרות של עולם, with which he summons us to תשובה. As we say in davening:

תקע בשופר גדול לחרותנו; *sound the great shofar for our redemption.*

And just as we have three types of shofar that we might blow, so הקב"ה has three different kinds of shofar.

The first shofar of the עולם של עולם is a שופר של איל - the shofar of יצחק. This

shofar is is the spark of קדושה, that spark lit at עקידת יצחק, that burns in every Jewish heart. It is the inner shofar that propels בעלי תשובה to abandon their secular life for a life of Torah, the yearning for קדושה that inspired thousands to join the דף יומי after the last סיום הש"ס, the spirit that moves young men and women to eschew material prospects for a life dedicated to learning and teaching Torah, and that inspires Jews to make עליה to ארץ ישראל. All of these and more reflect the sound of that inner איל של שופר, which connects every Jewish heart to עקידת יצחק.

That is the first and greatest of the שופר's רבנו של עולם shofars; it is the שופר גדול, the great shofar.

Then there is another shofar. It is the shofar of Jewish collective identity, of Jewish pride. It is the shofar that inspired Jews - even Jews who were estranged from their heritage - to dedicate their lives and their strength and their all to rebuilding a Jewish homeland in ארץ ישראל. It is not a שופר של איל - it is far, even estranged, from the יראת שמים that was epitomized in עקידת יצחק - but it is a shofar nonetheless, and we can make a ברכה on it.

But there is another shofar that also calls us to תשובה, to take sudden stock of our lives. It is a shofar that reminds us how fragile and vulnerable we are, how much we depend on רחמי שמים, how much we have to earn our stay on this earth. It is not a shofar from a kosher animal - it is a shofar that is blown by our enemies. It is the shofar whose terrible blast we heard one week ago.

And so today, as we blow our שופר של איל, we turn to the רבנו של עולם and say: תקע - Blow for us the שופר גדול, the שופר של איל, the שופר of קדושה; bring us back to you through the gentle spirit of קדושה, kindle in us Your spirit and bring us close to you with loving embrace.

מרן די בשמיא לך מתחנן - Master of the world we beseech you: Let the שופר of destruction be blown for your enemies; let them hear the shattering תרועה - the תרועה of תרועים - *shatter them* - תרועים בשבט ברזל ככלי יוצר תנפצם - *shatter them with an iron staff, burst them like a clay vessel*.

And show us soon the fulfillment of the prophecy:

ובאו האובדים - *on that day the great shofar will be sounded*; and the missing will return from the land of Ashur, and those flung away from the land of Mitzrayim, and they will bow before Hashem in His holy mountain, in ירושלים במהרה בימינו אמן