



MERCAZ HARAV

The Central Universal Yeshivah founded by HaRav Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook zt"l

Rosh Hashana 5767

NEWSLETTER

THE SHOFAR AND THE WALL

The Holy Temple in Jerusalem was twice destroyed - first by the Babylonians, and then by the Romans. But one wall remains standing, a living symbol of the Jewish people's ownership over the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem: the Kotel HaMa'aravi, or Western Wall.

What follows is an excerpt, translated from the Hebrew, from the memoirs of Rabbi Moshe Segal (1904-1985), a Lubavitcher Chassid who was active in the struggle to free the Holy Land from British rule.

In those years, the area in front of the Kotel did not look as it does today. Only a narrow alley separated the Kotel and the Arab houses on its other side. The British Government forbade us to place an Ark, tables or benches in the alley; even a small stool could not be brought to the Kotel.

The British also instituted the follow-

ing ordinances, designed to humble the Jews at the holiest place of their faith: it is forbidden to pray out loud, lest one upset the Arab residents; it is forbidden to read from the Torah (those praying at the Kotel had to go to one of the synagogues in the Jewish quarter to conduct the Torah reading); it is forbidden to sound the shofar on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The British Government placed policemen at the Kotel to enforce these rules.

On Yom Kippur of that year [1930], I was praying at the Kotel. During the brief intermission between the Musaf and Minchah prayers, I overheard people whispering to each other: "Where will we go to hear the shofar? It'll be impossible to blow here. There are as many policemen as people praying..." The Police Commander himself was there, to make sure that the Jews will not, G-d forbid, sound the single blast that closes the fast. I listened to these whisperings, and

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thought to myself: Can we possibly forgo the sounding of the shofar that accompanies our proclamation of the sovereignty of G-d? Can we possibly forgo the sounding of the shofar which symbolizes the redemption of Israel? True, the sounding of the shofar at the close of Yom Kippur is only a custom, but 'A Jewish custom is Torah!' I approached Rabbi Yitzchak Horenstein, who served as the Rabbi of our 'congregation', and said to him: "Give me a shofar." "What for?" "I'll blow." "What are you talking about? Don't you see the police?" "I'll blow." The Rabbi abruptly turned away from me, but not before he cast a glance at the prayer stand at the left end of the alley. I understood: the shofar is in the stand. When the hour of the blowing approached, I walked over to the stand and leaned against it. I opened the drawer and slipped the shofar into my shirt. I had the shofar, but what if they saw me before I had a chance to blow it? I was still unmarried at the time, and following the Ashkenazic custom, did not wear a tallit. I turned to the person praying at my side, and asked him for his tallit. My request must have seemed strange to him, but the Jews are a kind people, especially at the holiest moments of the holiest day, and he handed me his tallit without a word. I wrapped myself in the tallit. At that moment, I felt that I had created my own private domain. All around me, a foreign government prevails, ruling over the people of Israel even on their holiest day and at their holiest place, and we are not free to serve our G-d; but under this tallit is another domain. Here I am under no

dominion save that of my Father in Heaven; here I shall do as He commands me, and no force on earth will stop me.

When the closing verses of the Ne'illah prayer - 'Hear O Israel,' 'Blessed be the name' and 'The L-rd is G-d' - were proclaimed, I took the shofar and blew a long, resounding blast. Everything happened very quickly. Many hands grabbed me. I removed the tallit from over my head, and before me stood the Police Commander, who ordered my arrest. I was taken to the kishleh, the prison in the Old City, and an Arab policeman was appointed to watch over me. Many hours passed; I was given no food or water to break my fast. At midnight, the policeman received an order to release me, and he let me out without a word.

As I exited the gate, I met a group of young men from Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav, the Jerusalem yeshiva founded by Rav Kook. 'My friends!' I called out. 'What are you doing here at midnight?' They told me that immediately after I blew the shofar, some Mercaz HaRav students who were present hurried off to tell the chief rabbi, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, what had happened to me. He was happy to hear that someone sounded the shofar at the Kotel, but saddened to hear that I was arrested. All this happened before Rav Kook broke his fast. He did not begin to eat until he called the secretary of the High Commissioner of Palestine, and demanded my immediate release. When his request was refused, the chief rabbi stated that he would not break his fast until I was freed. The High Commissioner resisted for many hours, but finally, out of respect for the Rabbi, he had no choice but to set me free.

M E R C A Z H A R A V

EDITOR'S NOTE

As we go to print, the war the terrorist organizations in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip have forced on us is raging. The civilian population is suffering direct rocket hits in the fierce attacks, with heavy casualties of life and property, not to mention the cost of lives of our sol-

diers. Students from the Yeshiva as well, have been called up for reserve duty at the front. We hope and pray that when this newsletter reaches you, the war will have ended in our victory, with the help of G-d.



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"IF I AM HERE ..."

By Hagaon Harav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l

Hillel was legendary not only as a great scholar and leader, but also as an extremely humble man (see Shabbat30b). So one can only be surprised at the saying he was accustomed to make during Simchat Beit Hashoeiva. Hillel would say: "If I am here, all are here; if I am not here, who is here?" (Sukka 53a).

It appears that the explanation is based on the concept that the arba minim (lulav, etrog, ...) represent different categories of Jews (Vayikra Rabba 30:12). The etrog represents those who have taste (Torah) and smell (good deeds), the lulav represents those with taste without smell, the hadas represents those with smell without taste, and the arava, those with neither. In other words, it is normal for there to be different subsections in society. It is like a nation that is, metaphorically, broken up into different limbs, which can work efficiently if each section does what it is supposed to. But if we follow the example of the arba minim, it works only if they are all bound together.

We have other sources on the interaction between different segments of a Torah society. The gemara (Chulin 92a) states that while Bnei Yisrael are compared to a grapevine, different elements of Bnei Yisrael are compared to different parts of the vine. The ignorant are compared to the leaves and the scholars are compared to the clusters of fruit. The gemara stresses that the grapes should certainly pray for the leaves, because without them the fruit cannot grow.

There is one requirement for this symbiotic relationship to work. Each element must be aware what its task is. The etrog must know what is expected of it, as should the lulav, etc. If the etrog starts acting like a lulav, then we have a real problem. If every species goes down a notch, there will be no place for the tasteless, odorless arava in the assortment of species.

While it is important that all the species be taken together, it is likewise crucial that each should retain its distinct identity. That is what Hillel was saying at the Simchat Beit Hashoeiva. In order for me to have the type of influence that I am capable of, I need to be here as I am. If all of us will act according to their unique personality and abilities, and realize what his place and contributions need to be, then all will be there. In other words, we will all exist as a whole, specifically when every individual in the group is an individual. Then others will be able to come from afar, observe the way we function, and be influenced for the better. If we have flaws in the way we act, as the individuals we are meant to be, then our attempt to do a partial job at being what is right for someone else, will be insufficient, and the group will be destined for failure.

Courtesy of Eretz Hemdah

Eretz Hemdah was founded by Hagaon Harav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l and is a premier institution for training young Rabbis to take the Israeli Rabbinat's rigorous Yadin Yadin examinations (equivalent to Ph.D.).

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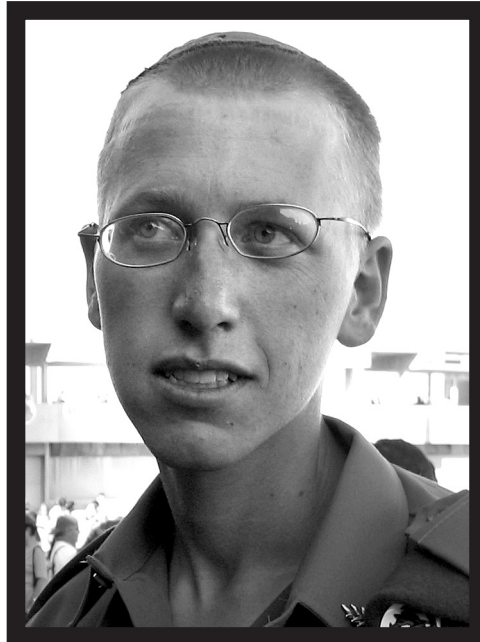
IN MEMORY OF AMICHAY MERCHAVYA ה"י

Amichay Merchavya was a student at our Yeshiva before he enlisted in the army. There his unusual talent for leadership was discovered and soon enough he was promoted to Sergeant. He was one of the first to enter Lebanon leading his men into combat with the terrorists. During one of the fierce fights there, Amichay was killed. He was only 24 years old. In his eulogy at the fresh grave his father said:

"He knew exactly what he was fighting for and at no moment did he doubt the just cause of this war. In this spirit he trained his soldiers and led them into battle. He succeeded in living his life according to his beliefs and education. He was a good-hearted, simple, straightforward person looking only for the path of truth, a fighter with a dream and lots of trust in G-d. He loved Eretz Yisrael with his whole heart and breathed the clean and pure air of this land consciously. Every so often he would tour the country and take in the beautiful sceneries.

Our nation endures difficult times, engaged in a cruel war which was forced on us, and it is our duty to continue this battle till victory. Even though I had to sacrifice my own son, I declare that it is a Mitzva to fight an enemy who is out to

destroy you. Our nation is strong and will not break nor be frightened. This war must be won and G-d willing shall be won."



*"... for He will avenge His servants' blood, He will bring vengeance upon His foes, and reconcile His people to His land."
(Deut. 32:43)*

NEWSLETTER

FORGIVE ME

The following is part of a letter written by a Haifa resident (temporarily living elsewhere) to the former residents of Gush Katif.

Friends and family members are being injured and killed. Some of us are without roofs over our heads. I closed my business since the beginning of the battle and I don't know what will happen. We are wandering between family and good people, who opened their home to us. Our family life has been impaired. I never thought that I, a Haifa resident for 30 years, would be a refugee in my own land.

Everything that is happening now sounds so familiar from the recent past.

For five years, you coped with bombs - and I didn't care. You buried family and friends - and I was indifferent. You found

yourselves without a home, just like that... and you never had someone that listened to you. Even when you came to visit me in my house, to explain, to convince, to share your feelings with me - I refused to listen to you...

... I am out of my house, without my regular routine. It is very hard, but the empathy, support and people identifying with our plight helps me go on.

People from Gush Katif and the Shomron: FORGIVE ME. Forgive us for leaving you on your own. Forgive us for not understanding you.

I am not a religious man or a mystic person. But we cannot ignore the deep relationship between my attitude towards you and the price that I am paying now for my late understanding.

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For the next eighteen years, until the Arab conquest of the Old City in 1948, the shofar was sounded at the Kotel every Yom Kippur. The British well understood the significance of this blast; they knew that it will ultimately demolish their reign over our land as the walls of Jericho crumbled before the shofar of Joshua, and they did everything in their power to prevent it. But every Yom Kippur, the shofar was sounded by men who knew they would be arrested for their part in staking our claim on the holiest of our possessions.

Postscript: Rabbi Moshe Segal was one of the first Jews to move into the Old City of Jerusalem after its liberation in 1967. At the end of Yom Kippur that year, Rabbi Segal once again blew the shofar at the Kotel - this time without fear of arrest by British policemen.

from the Hebrew by Yanki Tauber, posted on Chabad.org, with some additions from "An Angel Among Men", pp. 220-221

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PSALM 119: THE PEACE OF TORAH SCHOLARS

Prepared by Channan Morrison

Some people think that universal peace will only come when everyone shares the same opinions and viewpoints. They make the mistake of confusing homogeneous with harmonious. So when they see the diverse range of opinions and decisions produced by the research of Torah scholars, it appears to them that these scholars are increasing dissent and discord. Yet King David wrote,

"Great is the peace of those who love Your Torah" [Ps. 119:165]. And as R. Chanina expounded, "Torah scholars increase peace in the world, as it says, 'All Your children are students of G-d, great is the peace of Your children.' Instead of 'children' ('banayich'), let it read 'builders' ('bonayich')." [Brachot 64]

Rav Kook noted that both of these sources do not refer to a single, large peace ("shalom gadol"), but rather to 'increasing peace' ("rav shalom" and "marbim shalom"). True peace comes to the world as a multitude of peace - i.e., when all the different aspects are revealed, and we succeed in clarifying that each side has its appropriate time and place.

Those matters which seem to be extraneous or contradictory, in fact contribute to complete understanding. True wisdom reveals that it is precisely by gathering together all of the details,

seemingly divergent opinions, and different areas of Torah, that we are able to see the complete picture. When Torah scholars produce new insights or new interpretations, they are truly increasing the peace, by contributing to the totality of our understanding.

Light contains a multitude of hues. In order to acquire a complete understanding, we need to capture all of the various aspects and views. "Both opinions are the words of the Living G-d". We must not forgo a single talent or viewpoint; but rather expand our understanding of each one, and ascertain its appropriate place. And if we find a contradiction - this is how 'wisdom builds its home'! We must examine and discover the essence of the matter, and then everything will fit into place. A wealth of opinions enriches wisdom and increases knowledge.

"Instead of 'children', let it read 'builders'." Torah scholars are builders. Just as a building is constructed from many different parts, so too the true light of the world is built from different opinions and diverse methods.

[Ein Aya II:397-398; Olat Riyyah I:330-331].

Chanan Morrison is an alumnus of Mercaz Harav and runs an internet site and e-mail list dedicated to HaRav Kook's writings. (<http://ravKook.n3.net>)

NEWSLETTER



To my dear friends and supporters of
Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav Kook in Jerusalem,

On the eve of the New Year 5767, I would
like to take the opportunity to extend my
blessings, the blessings of a "Cohen," to wish
you and yours a happy and blessed year.

May the New Year be a year of redemption
and salvation, a year of honor and exaltation
for Israel and Eretz Yisrael. We are all await-
ing impatiently the materialization of the
visions of our prophets, "and you shall dwell
in peace without fear in your land."

May the Almighty grant us a year of peace
and tranquility, a year of health and success,
and may the merit of your participation in the
Torah education of the young generation at
Mercaz HaRav, be a credit to you and your
family. Amen.

Rabbi Avraham Shapiro
Rosh Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav
Former Chief Rabbi of Israel

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