

THE PRICE FOR BLOWING THE SHOFAR IN SHUL

Every day, at dawn, the melodies of the Sephardic Selichot recited in Jerusalem's many synagogues could be heard, punctuated with the sounds of shofar blasts, summoning people to return in repentance before the approaching Day of Judgment.

Most of Jerusalem families were preparing or ready for the sacred service that awaited them. Among them, the prayer leaders and shofar blowers stood out. Each one was practicing their task and preparing to be worthy of the role. Rabbi Shlomo-Chaim Stern, was a 10th generation veteran shofar blower whose family had held the position in the main synagogue of the Hasidic community in the Me'ah She'arim neighborhood since the day it was founded. He had inherited the position from his father, and was a throwback to previous generations, who understood that "the reward for a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself." His true happiness came from having been granted the ability and talents to bring merit to the public through his mitzvah fulfillment.

Rabbi Shlomo Chaim's preparations were different from those of the younger men. For him, the entire month of Elul was for repentance. He spent hours studying Torah and praying, and cut back considerably on food and sleep.

Whenever someone would caution him to take better care of his health so that he would have the strength to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, he would respond, "Am I truly worthy of being counted among the public shofar blowers? I do it because the congregation insists I continue in my role. Surely the merit of the community will protect me, and Heaven will grant strength to the weary."

Shlomo Chaim had never once considered asking for payment for his sacred service, much less accepting it, even though his financial situation was far from good.

In the month of Elul in the year 5668 [1908], Chaim Shlomo's wife learned that the large synagogue in the new neighborhood of Zichron Moshe was looking for a shofar blower, and offering to pay twenty pounds—a tremendous sum in those days.

The thought of an unexpected income addition, especially during the holiday season was irresistibly appealing to her. She began urging her husband to accept the position.

Shlomo Chaim pleaded: "What difference will these few pounds make? The Shulchan Aruch itself says that one does not see blessing in money earned in this way. And how could I leave the position I inherited from my father of blessed memory, who prayed and blew the shofar in our synagogue for thirty years? Will we not have to answer for that on the Day of Judgment for such a thing before the One Who dwells on High?"

But his wife did not relent. The children are growing up, and soon they will reach marriageable age, yet they do not even have a respectable garment to wear.

His wife, refused to give up. She enlisted several respected Hasidim from her husband's shul, to try to persuade him to follow her advice. She also secretly told the officials of Zichron Moshe that her husband would be willing to accept the position.

Eventually, after the combined efforts of his wife and the congregants who had joined the campaign to pressure him, Shlomo Chaim softened his resistance. He agreed to take the job, even though he still did not want to.

On the first day of Selichot week, Rabbi Shlomo set out for Zichron Moshe to lead the morning prayer and blow the shofar there, so that the payment he was due to receive for the Rosh Hashanah blasts would not be considered payment for work performed on the festival.

However, as soon as he started, it immediately felt wrong. Praying somewhere other than his regular shul, together with the different liturgy used in that synagogue, unsettled him and threw him off balance. His daily routine, which he had accustomed himself to for many years, was completely disrupted; He was unable to focus properly, neither his heart nor his mind was into it.

Later, he returned home troubled. If today was this difficult, he wondered, what will happen on Rosh Hashanah?

That night he was unable to fall asleep. Finally he managed to doze off, but not for long. He saw his father in a dream, who started speaking to him:

"Careful! guard the shofar and the shofar blowing from you inherited from me. According to Torah law, if the mouth of a shofar has been covered with gold, the gold is a separation between the mouth and the shofar, making it invalid for use for the mitzvah on Rosh Hashana."

Before dawn, when Rabbi Shlomo Chaim arose, his mind was made up. He would not exchange his sacred responsibility for the twenty pounds from Zichron Moshe. When he returned from the morning prayer, he asked his wife to cancel the arrangement at Zichron Moshe. This time, she did not argue. Seeing the day and night he had endured, she finally understood what her pressure had done.

"I see that this matter is affecting you deeply -- your heart and even your life," she confessed. "I thought it would be good for me and the family. But now, who knows, what harm I might have caused, G-d forbid? Do what you believe is right. I am confident that our Father in Heaven will inscribe and seal us for a good and blessed year, without those twenty pounds."

Rabbi Shlomo Chaim was still not at peace with his decision. His wife's disappointment touched him, and consulted Rabbi Yitzchak-Tzvi Rivlin of Zichron Moshe. He hoped that the rabbi would understand him, and would guide him see what was best for him to do. He went to the rabbi and told him all that had transpired in the previous two days, including the dream and asked to be released from his commitment.

The rabbi said "I don't think this is a question of Jewish law. If you are asking to be released, then you are released, and free from this post, as you requested. With God's help, the synagogue will find another shofar blower, although I doubt that he will be as skilled and as God-fearing as you." But the rabbi continued, "I would advise you to stay and blow the shofar here. Your dream must have come from your thoughts during the day. The payment is totally permissible. First, the shofar is also blown on weekdays throughout Elul. Second, the money is given as a gift. Besides, can you really say that gold or the money has been added to your shofar creating a physical separation?"

Rabbi Shlomo Chaim was embarrassed, apologized and said: "Heaven forbid I would say that the halacha is that money itself creates a separation between his mouth and the shofar."

"In my own mind, this separation exists. I fear I will not be able to concentrate properly on the necessary kavanot that one must have when blowing the shofar publicly. What should I do?"

When the rabbi realized that Rabbi Shlomo Chaim had made up his mind to return to his own shul, he argued no further. Instead, he wished him, "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year," and they parted in peace.

Rabbi Shlomo Chaim left the rabbi's home relieved and in good spirits, went to his own synagogue to inform the officials that he had changed his mind. He would not give up his established position after all.

That year Rabbi Shlomo Chaim's shofar blowing was better than ever. The verses recited before the blowing emerged with greater power and stirred the hearts of everyone present. Every shofar blast was clear, strong, and flawless.

During the shofar blasts sounded during the repetition of the special Rosh Hashana Amidah prayer, a distinguished guest entered quietly. It was none other than Rabbi Yitzchak Tzvi Rivlin, who had come to hear Rabbi Shlomo Chaim's shofar blowing.

After the service, a synagogue official asked him: "Rabbi, what did you think of the shofar blasts?"

The rabbi replied: "What is so surprising about it? After all, this shofar blower had already defeated the Satan (accusing angel) before Rosh Hashana!"

CONGREGATION MachaneChodosh SHAVUON WEEKLY NEWS

Rosh Hashanah

1&2 Tishrei 5787

Our 87th
Anniversary Year

Rabbi Emeritus
Manfred Gans z"l

Rabbi
Yossi Mendelson

President Emeritus
Herbert Jaffe z"l

President
Yehoshua Perl

Please join us following services for Shabbos Wine & Cake Kiddush in the newly renovated Kent Auditorium

WE WELCOME OUR CHAZZANIM SHRAGA
HERSHTIK AND FULI MARKEL

L'SHANA TOVA!

MAY IT BE THY WILL,
L-rd our G-d, and G-d of Our
Fathers, That You Renew
Unto Us a
Happy and Sweet New Year!



CONGREGATION
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*Sincerest Wishes for a Healthy
and Prosperous 5787*

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

EREV ROSH HASHANA

Friday, September 11

Selichos/Shacharis	6:30 AM
Light Shabbos/Yomtov Candles	6:53 PM
Mincha-Kabbolas Shabbos/Yomtov	7:00 PM

FIRST DAY ROSH HASHANA

Shabbos, September 12

Shacharis	8:00 AM
Reading of the Torah	9:15 AM
Mincha	6:40 PM
Maariv	7:30 PM
Light Candles.....	after 7:50 PM

**Yaknehaz Kiddush*

SECOND DAY ROSH HASHANA

Sunday, September 13

Shacharis	8:00 AM
Reading of the Torah	9:15 AM

Tki'at Shofar

Communal Luncheon by RSVP

Mincha	4:00 PM
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Tashlich

Yomtov Ends	7:49 PM
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TZOM GEDALIA

Monday, September 14

Fast begins	5:08 AM
Shacharis/Selichos	6:30 AM
Mincha/Maariv	6:35 PM
Fast Ends	7:34 PM

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Selichos/Shacharis

Monday - Friday.....	6:30 AM
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Mincha/Maariv

9/15 - 9/17	6:55 PM
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SHABBOS HAAZINU/SHUVA

Friday September 18

Candle lighting	6:41 PM
Mincha/Kabbolas Shabbos	6:50 PM

Shabbos, September 19

Shacharis	9:00 AM
Shabbos Shuva Drasha	5:15 PM
Mincha-Shalosh Seudos	6:00 PM
Shabbos Ends	7:38 PM

UPCOMING EVENTS

SHABBOS SUKKOS KIDDUSH

September 26th-Join us for a delicious Chili Bowl Shabbos Sukkos lunch, following services in the Sukkah. No charge.

ASK THE RABBI IN THE SUKKAH

Shabbos, September 26th 5:15 PM - The Sisterhood of CMC invites you to bring your toughest questions to Rabbi Mendelson. All are welcome. Refreshments will be served. To volunteer to set up, please speak to Iris Goldberg or Alice Tepler. Men and women are welcome.

SUKKOT MEAL

Sunday, September 27th-Join us for a Potluck Sukkos Lunch, following services. Bring your own Parve or Meat lunch from home. Kiddush and Challah will be provided.

TALMUD TORAH SUKKAH PARTY & CRAFT

Tuesday September 29 at 5 PM -Pizza in the Hut

All children ages 3 and up are welcome. RSVP to Jasmine Larian Katanov.

ORDER YOUR LULAV & ESROG

Visit MachaneChodosh.org/High-Holy-Days and use the form to order your lulav and esrog or aravot. The deadline is Wednesday, September 16th.

LEARN TO READ HEBREW IN FIVE SESSIONS

Sunday Mornings at 10:00 AM, beginning October 18th. Learn how to read Hebrew and follow the prayers in the Siddur. Register at MachaneChodosh.org/Read. Study materials \$36.

ZELLE THE SHUL!

Send your Zelle payments to officemachanechodosh@gmail.com.

Of course you may still use your credit card in the office and on our website, this is just one more way that you can give your tzedaka. Thank you for your continued support!

IN OUR SHUL FAMILY

We thank Itzik Kotler for his sponsorship of the children's snacks.

Thank you to this week's security screeners/friendly greeters for helping to keep our shul safe.