

# CHIZUK AND IDUD

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

Every year, as Yom Kippur draws to a close, the entire congregation eagerly awaits the concluding sounding of the shofar, before fervently breaking out in song: L'SHANA HABA'A BIRUSHALAYIM HAB'NUYA! As we anticipate this special moment, it is important to remember that this familiar routine was not always so simple. When the British Mandatory Forces ruled over Eretz Yisrael, blowing the shofar at the Kotel at the conclusion of Yom Kippur was prohibited lest it antagonize the Arab population and spur civil unrest. In the year 1930 a courageous Jew decided to sound the shofar nonetheless, and was immediately taken into custody. When word of his arrest reached Rav Kook zt"l, he immediately set out towards the home of the High Commissioner in order to demand the young man's release. Rav Kook pointed out the religious significance of the act, while the commissioner stressed the fact that a government decree had been violated. In the end, some four hours later, the man was ultimately released. More recently, tales of heroism abound surrounding the blowing of the Shofar under perilous conditions in the Ghettoes and camps. The Yad Vashem website showcases the Shofar fashioned by Moshe ben Dov Winterter who braved death in order to clandestinely prepare it in a metal workshop in one of the forced labor camps. Elaborate plans were put into place in order to procure a ram's horn, a guard was bribed, and the shofar which

was then blown can be found in Yad Vashem under the caption: "The call of the shofar from the depths of the Holocaust".

The pairing of the Shofar's plaintive cries with our supplications of L'SHANA HABA'A BIRUSHALAYIM HAB'NUYA!, remind me of a story told of one of the Chassidic Rebbes.

Every day during the month of Elul, the Rebbe's grandson impatiently waited for the end of the morning prayers in order to hear the sounds of the Shofar. On Erev Rosh Hashana the shofar was not blown, and the child who was too young to understand or to accept the reasons proffered burst out in tears. The Rebbe's unrestrained love for his grandson led him to relent, and he allowed the shofar to be blown.

The next day, as the Rebbe addressed the congregation, he too began to cry. Tearfully describing how his love had led him to abrogate the custom and sound the shofar one day too early, the Rebbe turned his face towards the heavens: "Avinu Shebashamayim, your children are crying out to You, pleading with you to let them hear the Shofar Gadol L'cheiruteinu, the great shofar of freedom which will gather them back to Israel - Ribbono Shel Olam - do you not love your children enough to accede to their request - even if it may be premature..."

I want to conclude by sharing an additional Yom Kippur story; this time a contemporary tale from just a few short years ago - with a markedly different setting than the previous ones - an army base deep in the Negev desert. A large group of Hesder students stationed in an



army base down south, wished to purify themselves in a mikva before Yom Kippur. The closest Mikva was in the city of Eilat, and the commanding officer balked at the logistics of transporting a couple hundred soldiers, removing them their important training.

The Rabbi of the army base (my son Zevi) came up with a novel suggestion: Measuring the dimensions of an abandoned fish pond on the base, it was determined that the pond could easily hold forty Se'ahs of water (around 150 U.S. liquid gallons) and thus serve as a makeshift Mikva. There was just one small problem: How do you provide rain water in the desert? The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 201:30) provided the solution: Once frozen, the water is considered a new entity, and therefore when melted, the ice runoff is no longer categorized as Mayim She'uvim (drawn water). The commanding officer authorized the plan, and a call was made to order two tons of ice cubes, which, when melted, would constitute a temporary kosher mikva for these young soldiers' purposes.

The ice was delivered a little late, and thus on Erev Yom Kippur although the sun was blazing above, the first group of soldiers immersed amongst the floating ice cubes! The soldiers shiveringly claimed that the Negev mikva was much colder than the famed Ari HaKadosh's Mikva in Tzfat!

This quaint story nicely illustrates the modern day mesirut nefesh for Torah and mitzvot of religious soldiers within the IDF, as well as the willingness of the secular commanders to go along with their unusual requests!

This year as the Shofar is blown in your shul and you cry out - L'SHANA HABA'A BIRUSHALAYIM, it is time to finally resolve to put words to action! It is time to add your own personal tale of mesirut nefesh, time to come home and immerse yourself in the kedusha of Eretz Yisrael.

May L'SHANA HABA'A be this very year!

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