



Redeem the Besieged A Rosh Hashanah Special

It was almost noon, and the residents of Migdal Ha'Emek were on their way home to their holiday meals after the conclusion of the prayers on Rosh Hashanah. This was my first year in Migdal Ha'Emek, my first year as a rabbi, the first year without my Rebbe and community.

That was 45 years ago, Rosh Hashanah of 5729 (1968). I was somewhat depressed, even though I knew I was on a mission, but on the other hand I really missed my Rebbe and the special holiday atmosphere at his "court". Jewish law prescribes that the *Shliach Tsibur*, prayer leader, should have a broken heart – and I certainly had one.

I carried the Shofar as I made my way home and then remembered that there was a nearby Kibbutz, and the members have not yet heard the Shofar. I decided to go and blow the Shofar for them. I entered the mess hall while they were eating lunch. All eyes turned to me. They asked me what I was doing there; I answered I came to blow the Shofar for them on Rosh Hashanah. All were moved by the gesture. Some covered their heads; the elders who remembered their homes had tears in their eyes. I prayed to G-d: See your children, who love you, even in this Kibbutz their souls are drawn to you.

Before I blew the Shofar I told them a story:

During those years the Jews of the USSR were persecuted by the Communist regime. Only in Moscow there was a functioning *Shul*. The community was small, and they came together only at the end of the day of Rosh Hashanah, after work. Rabbi Klemes, the community rabbi, was not sure what to say to his congregation; he was sure there were KGB agents in the crowd. He ascended the podium and began: "Two people came to me with an argument about the ownership of a chicken. I contemplated what I should do"

"I told them to bring me the chicken, and I tied its legs. I then let the chicken outside and undid its binds. The chicken ran to its lawful owner. "You see", I told the two, "the second you undo its bindings it runs back to its source..."

He then shouted out: "**Please, with the might of your right, redeem the besieged**" – if they undo the bindings of the Jew who is temporarily tied down, "**Receive your nations' prayers**" – you will immediately see them running to a *Shul* to pray to their Father in Heaven.

I then turned to the Kibbutz members: "Dear Jews, look upon our state. We are still in exile, each in his own way, but now we have a chance to fulfill a commandment and reconnect with our source.

It turns out that the echo of the Shofar was loudly resounding. One of the Kibbutz members asked to strengthen the Jewish heritage on the kibbutz. They established a *Shul* in the Kibbutz. From that day on, for the past 45 years, Migdal Ohr's staff and students have been maintaining a vibrant community there.

The sound of the Shofar is the power of belief.