

“ON THAT DAY A GREAT SHOFAR WILL SOUND...” (MUSAF)

**The prosecuting angel is about to present his case**

**R**OSH HASHANA. The Almighty sits in judgement in the heavenly court. Celestial angels prosecute and defend, with the fate of every human being hanging in the balance. The prosecuting angel is about to present his case against us when, suddenly, he hears a series of piercing shofar blasts emanating from the earthly realm. Confused, he panics, assuming it to be the shofar heralding the arrival of the Mashiach, and therefore the end of the angel's existence. According to the Talmud (Rosh HaShana 26a), this is one of the reasons we blow the shofar on Rosh HaShana – to confuse the prosecuting angel, thereby rendering him unable to perform his job.

The evil inclination (*soton*), the prosecuting angel and the angel of death are one and the same, our sages tell us. He is quite capable at his task, and succeeds in trapping even the most intelligent of us in his snares of sin. Granting him a great degree of wisdom, how can we understand his perennial gullibility, falling for the same ruse year after year for so long? We feel quite certain that these blasts are not the sounds of the shofar of the Mashiach; how much more certain should he be, the one responsible for causing us to sin and thereby postponing the final redemption?

**His fear is well-grounded**

Rabbi Isaac Sher, a great *mussar* luminary of the last generation, answered this question. Our archenemy, the *soton*, is no fool. His fear is well-grounded. He is acutely aware of how close we are to bringing Mashiach. This year's shofar blast could very well be announcing the Mashiach's arrival. It depends only upon us.

With each passing year that we remain in exile we become more skeptical of the possibility of our redemption. We ask: “If the *teshuva* – repentance – of our pious ancestors was not sufficient to bring it about, how can our *teshuva* be enough to merit the ultimate redemption?” The Chofetz Chaim addressed these doubts: The Jewish people are one organism, transcending not only personal and geographical boundaries, but also the bounds of time and history. Our collective sufferings are cumulative, from the slavery in Egypt continuing through the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the Crusades, Inquisition, pogroms and massacres and more recently the Holocaust. Our blood and tears have stained the soil of every land that our people have found themselves. But every drop of blood and every tear is counted and weighed by the Almighty. If we can feel the pain and suffering of our people, past and present, then we can cry to our merciful Father in heaven, “Even if our *teshuva* is not as complete as it should be consider it together with our suffering as a people, throughout history, and put an end to our exile!”

**“Consider it together with our suffering as a people, throughout history”**

We do not have the perspective of the *soton* to know exactly how close we are to redemption. But we must bear in mind that every little bit of extra effort on our part could be the *teshuva* which tips the heavenly scale to the side of merit for ourselves, and the entire Jewish people. It is within our grasp – we need only reach for it. May this be the year in which the *soton's* fears, and our hopes and prayers, are realized.