# An Explanation of the
# Musaf Service for Rosh Hashannah

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## PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this guide to describe and explain the unique features of the Musaf Service of Rosh Hashannah. Despite translations, this service remains largely inaccessible because of its length, its complexity and its unparalleled nature. This guide is meant to remove these degrees of difficulty to the end of informed and purposeful prayer.

## BACKGROUND

To understand the Musaf Service of Rosh Hashannah, a few comments about the Amidah in general and Musaf in particular are necessary. The two classic weekday Amidot, Shaharit and Minha, are in compensation for the Korban Tamid Shel Shaharit and the Korban Tamid Shel Bain Ho'Arbayim, the regular morning and late afternoon offering in the Temple. The rationale for substituting T'fillah-Prayer for Korban-offering is found in Hosea 14:3, "Forgive all guilt and accept what is good. Instead of bulls, we will pay with the offering of our lips." The Musaf Amidah stands in compensation, for the Musaf or additional Korban offered in the Temple on Sabbaths, the six Torah holidays, and Rosh Hodesh, the New Moons.

The structure of the regular Amidah is based on 18 Brahot.

I. The Prefix or Introductory Blessings

a. Avot – Patriarchs: This Braha answers the question, Who are we to talk to God? The answer is, As the children of the patriarchs, we are members of God's intimate family.

b. Gevurot – The Powers: This Braha answers the question, Who is God with whom we should seek communication? The answer is, He is the one who has the power to resurrect the dead, for inherent in the power to create is the power to bring life to the lifeless.

c. Kedushat HaShem – The Sanctification of the Name: This Braha answers the question, Now that we know who we are and now that we know who God is, what is the nature of the relationship? The answer is, God and Israel share in Kedusha as God is Kadosh – sacred, so is Israel. This blessing, which sanctifies the name of God, establishes the critical link on which prayer is based. Parallel to God's sanctity is Israel's sanctity. Israel is the sacred people who know the sacred Name. Because they know the sacred Name, they are able to communicate with God.

II. The Middle Twelve

a. The First Six – personal petitions.
b. The Second Six – national petitions.

III. The Suffix or Culminating Blessings

a. Avodah – The Service: This Braha seeks the restoration of the service in the Temple which carries with it the residence of the Shehinah in our midst. It answers the question, What is the most efficacious form of communication and how will we know that our prayers have been answered?

b. Hoda'ah – Thanksgiving: This Braha answers the question, Why have we prayed to God? The answer is, He is the source of all life and all blessing.

c. Birkat Kohanim – This blessing in either its Sim Shalom or Shalom Rav form is a contemplative essay upon the priestly blessing. This blessing answers the question, How will the blessings of God, the source of all life, be realized? The answer is, through the light of God's presence, as reflected in Shalom.

The Personal and National Petition Blessings, the middle twelve blessings of the weekday Amidah, are set aside on Shabbat and Yamim Tovim. On these days, 18 blessings are not recited; seven are recited, the three Prefix Blessings and the three Suffix Blessings. The Kedushat Hayom Blessing is inserted between them.

What is the purpose of the Kedushat Hayom blessing? Kedushat Hayom, literally translated, means the sanctity of the day. The sanctity or Kedusha of the day expresses its unique feature. Thus, for example, Passover's definition is, Zeman Heiruteinu. This is its unique feature. It celebrates freedom. The central Kedusha or unique feature of Sukkot is joy and happiness. Hence, in the Kedushat Hayom Blessing for Sukkot, we describe this holiday as Zeman Simhateinu.

The Kedushat Hayom Blessing for Shabbat ends with the blessing Mekadesh HaShabbat. This blessing is recited four times on Shabbat, once during the Musaf service and in the other three Amidot. The middle section or Bracha which culminates in Mekadeh HaShabbat is the Kedushat Hayom Blessing. It begins, following the third blessing, with a brief essay. On Friday night, its theme is creation. This essay is then substantiated by the quotation of verses from the Torah. During the morning service, the essay is devoted to revelation and is then substantiated by verses from the Torah. For the Minha Service, the essay is devoted to the theme of unity and no use is made of verses from the Torah. The theme of the Musaf Service for Shabbat is the Musaf Korban, offering. Hence the introductory essay of the Kedushat Hayom Blessing is about that offering and culminates in Mekadesh HaShabbat.

Likewise, the Musaf Service for the *Yamim Tovim* has as the fourth and center Braha, the *Kedushat Hayom* blessing. As is the case with Shabbat, it is devoted to the offering in the Temple for that specific holiday. However, it includes a more involved set of prayerful essays.

**Section I. Atoh Verhartanu –** Its theme is the Chosenness of Israel.

**Section II. VaTiten Lanu –** Its theme is the gift of the specific holiday and the designation of its critical features.

**Section III. U'mi'pnai Hato'ainu –** Its theme is that Temple offering is not with us because of the destruction of the Temple and exile brought on by sin. It offers a prayer for restoration.

**Section IV. V'et Musaf** – This section sets forth the verses from the Torah that describe the offering of the specific holiday.

**Section V. Elokainu –** This is a prayer devoted to the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem and to the fulfillment of the mitzva of pilgrimage three times a year.

**Section VI. V'hasi'ainu –** This is an adaptation of its counterpart in the Shabbat Musaf. It is a prayer devoted to the general themes of Torah, Redemption and Purity of Heart. And, it is the prayer that concludes with the classic *Kedushat Hayom* formula for the holidays, *Me Kadesh Yisrael V'hazmanim*.

## MUSAF OF ROSH HASHANAH

We are now ready to approach Musaf of Rosh HaShanah. The above description of the Musaf Amidah applies to Yom Kippur and the Shalosh Regalim. It does not apply to Rosh HaShanah. On Rosh HaShanah, instead of seven Brahot, three Prefix, three Suffix plus the Kedushat Hayom blessing, there are nine blessings. Of these nine blessings, what concerns us are the middle three. The three Prefix and Suffix blessings are common to all Amidot. On Rosh HaShanah, between the first three Brahot and the last three Brahot, there are three additional Brahot.

The first one is Kedushat Hayom and Malhuyot – Sovereignty. The second of these middle three is Zihronot – Remembrances. And, the third Braha is Shofrot. It's self-evident that an understanding of these three unique sections in the Musaf service is somehow dependent upon and linked to the mitzvah of Shofar because each section culminates in Shofar sounding. At this point, some questions are in order.

1. Why is the shofar sounded on Rosh HaShanah?
2. Why is it sounded in Musaf, in contrast to the mitzvot of all other holidays which are performed at the earliest possible moment?

3. Why are Malhiyot, Zihronot and Shofrot recited in Musaf?

While the mitzvah of shofar has many benefits and while there are many ways to understand them, there is only one reason why the shofar is sounded on Rosh HaShanah. It is a coronation ritual. Before proceeding with an explanation of coronation as an idea, and before setting forth the sources of this idea, a word or two about ritual is in order. A ritual is simply a behavior that gives concrete and active expression to beliefs, ideas, thoughts, feelings or aspirations. All cultures have rituals. Not all rituals are religious but many are. In regular human relationships, there are a variety of rituals. The tender of a wedding ring is the transformation of the gift of jewelry into a concrete expression of love and commitment. The standing at attention while raising or lowering the flag, is a behavior that expresses loyalty to country and to American ideals.

The basic ideas and beliefs of any Jewish holiday are given concrete expression in its rituals. The rituals are simply an active expression of those ideas and beliefs. Coronation is very much like inauguration in modern times. It is the ritual by which a society invests a sovereign, a ruler, a king or queen, into office and demonstrates honor and obedience to the office and the sovereign. In democratic societies, inauguration serves essentially the same purpose. Only one king was arrogant enough to invest himself into office and that was Charlemagne. Rosh HaShannah is the day when the Jewish people, year in and year out, coronate God, investing God in office. The ritual of coronation is shofar sounding. The first time the shofar is sounded is at Sinai. It is there that Israel first proclaims God as sovereign.

This idea is a consequence of the creation of the world which is celebrated on Rosh HaShannah. Following shofar sounding the Mahzor proclaims hayom harat olam-this day is the world conceived. Rosh HaShannah is the day on which God created the world, more precisely it is the day on which Adam and Eve were created. It is the day on which they sinned. And, it is the day on which God tells Adam that he will not be punished, as promised, with death for eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. God's creatorship of the world, is the reason for His sovereignty and His subsequent judgment of humanity on this birthday. In the words of the rabbis, God informs Adam, "As you have come before me for judgment this day, and have been set free from punishment, so too will all your children come before me on this day ever-after for judgment, and they will be set free." Coronation is the acknowledgement that it is God who creates and God who judges. How does God attain office? God is, if one dare say it, invested in office this day, year in and year out. Indeed, it is fundamental to our way of emunah that the shofar is the act of coronation and is the announcement that God's presence has come to dwell in our midst. This is what the shofar heralds at Sinai.

Why is the Shofar sounded in the Musaf service? Why is it not sounded earlier in the day? The other holiday mitzvot, such as the eating of matzah or sitting in the sukkah are performed by individuals. The mitzvah of Shofar is the only holiday mitzvah that we perform today that was part of the collective Avodah or service in the ancient Temple in

Jerusalem. In the Temple in Jerusalem, the Shofar was not sounded during the offering of the regular morning sacrifice, the Tamid Shel Shahar, because this sacrifice was offered every day. It is not specific to Rosh HaShanna. What is unique to the Rosh HaShanah service in the Temple is the Musaf service, the additional offering presented because it is Rosh HaShanah. A holiday ritual is a practice specific to and expressive of the central theme of a given holiday. The sounding of the Shofar is unique to Rosh HaShanah. Hence, in the Temple in Jerusalem, this mitzvah was performed at that moment in the Temple's service, and as part of that ritual in the Temple service which celebrated the holiday, Rosh HaSahana, namely, the Musaf sacrifice. For that reason, we continue the practice and perform the mitzvah of Shofar sounding during the Musaf service.

Furthermore, the mitzvah of shofar is different than the mitzvot of other holidays. It is the only one whose ultimate fulfillment is dependent upon the collective. The eating of matzoh, the sitting in the Sukkah and other such mitzvot are for individual fulfillment, and while the shofar certainly must be sounded and heard by individuals who can not come to the synagogue, the fulfillment of the mitzvah, lies in the collective communal investiture of God into office. God's coronation by definition is possible only in and through the collectivity of Israel. An idea such as this is impossible without reference to a Torah text, and certainly the rabbis do not create such ideas out of whole cloth.

Ma'ase avot siman l'banim means events in the lives of the ancestors indicate mitzvot for their children. In this case, the incident is the giving of the Torah. The natural place to turn to in order to understand shofar is the first place in the Torah in which shofar is mentioned. The sounding of the shofar at the time of the giving of the Torah (Shemot 19) is nothing more or less than a coronation ritual. The shofar announces the arrival of God upon Mount Sinai and the acceptance of His sovereignty by the Jewish people. The origin of shofar is in the coronation ritual involving the whole of Israel at Sinai. Rosh HaShannah is a replication of that first Sinaitic coronation.

Now we can turn to the Musaf service itself and the next set of questions. The reason that the Rosh HaShannah Musaf is composed of Malhiyot, Zihronot and Shofrot (hereafter, MZSh), is that the purpose of these three sections is to set the stage and prepare us for shofar sounding. Coronation of God requires thoughtful and intentional conviction. These three sections prepare us for that and are recited to set the stage in a religiously theatrical sense and in a contemplative way for the sounding of the shofar. Three sections are added to the Rosh HaShannah Musaf because the shofar, according to the Mishnah, must be sounded in three sets. The Mishnah in Tractate Rosh Hashannah says, "Seder tekiot shalosh, shel shalosh shalosh," which means that the shofar is to be sounded on three occasions during the Musaf service, and on each occasion three sounds are expressed. The three sounds are Tekiah, Teruah and Tekiah. The sounding of these three is the fulfillment of the Torah's mitzvah as the Mishnah understands it. (Shevarim enters the picture because of the ambiguous nature of the Teruah.)

Because shofar sounding coronates God and announces His arrival, preparation is necessary. There must be understanding of what is about to take place. There must be understanding of the significance of God's coronation. There must be a preparation of the stage of inner life. That is the purpose of the three sections, MZSh.

Before proceeding to an item-by-item guide to the three sections, one final question needs to be resolved. Why do Zihronot and Shofrot have their own Braha, and why is Malhiyot folded into the Braha of Kedushat Hayom? The Kedusha, or unique sanctity and feature, of Rosh HaShannah is the coronation of God as sovereign. Therefore, it is reasonable to fold Malhiyot into Kedushat Hayom, because the unique feature of the day is God's sovereignty. There is no other text in all of our liturgy that so carefully develops the theme of God's sovereignty as Malhiyot. Hence, the Hatima of this section serves both purposes, Kedushat Hayom and Malhiyot. The first phrase, Melech al Kol Ha'aretz is the fulfillment of Malhiyot and Mekadesh Yisrael V'Yom Hazikoron fulfills Kedushat Hayom.

# GUIDE
# TO
# MALHIYOT, ZIHRONOT, SHOFROT

This guide is meant to be used with the Art Scroll Rosh HaShannah Mahzor (It is the one in widet use.This is unfortunate. This edition of the classic Mahzor is riddled with mistakes in translation. Its commentary is a hodge-podge of Jewish comments in which p'shat and Hassidic tales are woven together as if they are of equal weight. The page design is innocent of any sense that these t'fillot are poetry and not prose. The design also obscures Hazal's remarkable structure without which much of the meaning is lost. Thus rendering Hazal's beautiful and brilliant design mute.) It begins on Page 454 in the Silent Amidah with Malhiyot. Each of the three sections has the same structure; an introductory essay that sets forth the theme of the section; ten verses from Tanakh, three from the Torah, three from the Prophets, three from the Ketuvim and one from the Torah, whose purpose it is to show the basis in Tanakh for the ideas of each section of MZSh, and a closing essay that summarizes the theme and develops it. This is capped by a Braha.

## MALHIYOT – SOVEREIGNTY

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### The Introduction

The introductory essay to Malhiyot begins with the familiar Aleinu prayer. Because Aleinu is ever so common to our lips, we tend to take it for granted. It is, however, a carefully structured poetic prayer that sets forth a well thought out set of ideas. Aleinu is a poem based on the Torah's poetic structure, parallelism.

The basis of Malhiyot is found in the last words of the second phrase. "It is our obligation to give praise to the master of all reality, to ascribe greatness to the one who artistically fashions creation." The verb 'yotser' (who fashions creation) is taken from the narrative of the creation of Adam and Eve which took place on the first day of Rosh HaShannah. The second reason for praising Him is "that He has not made" the children of Abraham and Sarah "like the nations of the world...the nations of the world bow down to idols and emptiness," and the Jewish people bow down to the one God. He is the one God because it is He alone, "who spreads out the heavens and sets the foundations of earth." These three points, His creation of the natural order, His fashioning of man and woman and His election of Israel culminate in the closing verse of the first paragraph. It is based on the verb 'to know' and "you know and should consider well that there is no other God." The theme that "there is no other God," is taken from the first and second Commandments. It is not just that there is the one God who creates heaven and earth, but the demand of Judaism is for exclusivity in that relationship. One people for God, and the one God for Israel.

The consequence of this is the second paragraph whose subject is the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven or of God on earth, the recognition of Hashem as the one God, and the obligation to establish the world according to the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the task of Tikkun, the task of rectification, the task of establishment, the task of correction, the task of fixing the world, and the task of repair. This is possible only when wicked regimes are removed.

## Malhiyot – The Torah Verses

We now proceed to a description of the ten verses, page 456. The quotation of a verse by the rabbis in a prayer or in a Midrash is meant to be viewed in the way that Michelangelo understood the hewing of rock from a quarry. Before he worked on a piece of sculpture, he would go out to the quarry and watch as the stone was hewn, explaining that unless he understood the setting of the stone, the environment from which it emerged, he could not work with the rock. The same is true for a verse carved out of the quarry of the Torah. When the rabbis lift a verse out of the corpus of the Torah they assume that the reader knows the citation and its larger textual environment. Unless its context is understood, its meaning is lost and its application in a new setting, such as prayer, remains elusive.

The first three verses quoted in Malhiyot are from the Torah.

The first verse – "God will reign forever" (Shemot 15:18), is the proclamation of God as king in the Song of the Sea sung by Moshe and the Jewish people after the splitting of the sea. The quotation of this verse takes us back and asks us to re-live the experience of that first 'coronation'. At the outset of the Book of Shemot, the Jewish people who emerge as a people in slavery, do not know the one God. They come to know the one God through the report of Moshe and through the wonders that He works in Mitsrayim. The Ten Plagues have four audiences: Pharaoh, Pharaoh's magicians, the people of Mitsrayim and the Israelites. The message of the Ten Plagues is clear. When instructed to let Israel go, Pharaoh declaims, "Who is God? I know him not." God in effect says, I am the Creator, the Master of all nature. The first two plagues are in water, the next three in the realm of land, the next three in the realm of air. God is saying to Pharaoh as Creator, I am the Master of the three realms of nature which I array against you. The ninth plague is darkness, which reverses light created on the first day. The tenth plague is death, which reverses life created on the sixth day. God says to Pharaoh I turn all of nature against you from the first day to the sixth day of Creation. This culminates in the splitting of the sea and the defeat of Pharaoh and his armies. The citation of this verse in Malhiyot takes us back to the very first moment when the Jewish people came to know the one God as sovereign.

The second verse reads, "No harm is in sight for Jacob, no woe in view for Israel. The Lord their God is with them and their King's acclaim in their midst" (Bam. 23:21). At the beginning of the desert experience, it is Pharaoh who believes that he has spiritual

powers which he can use against God and the people of the one God. At the end of the desert experience, another King, Balak, believes that he can summon the spiritual powers of Bilaam and use them against the people of the one God. He summons Bilaam. At the outset, Bilaam acknowledges that whom God has blessed, he cannot curse. In acknowledging that God is the source of all blessing, he says, "When He blesses, I cannot reverse it. No harm is in sight for Jacob, no woe in view for Israel. The Lord their God is with them and their King's acclaim (t'ruat melekh, lit. the shofar sound that acclaims the King) in their midst." Mark well the two phrases in this verse are causally linked. How is it that Bilaam knows that "the Lord their God is with them?" He knows that because of the second phrase in the verse. Their king's terua is in their midst. God is with Israel because Israel acclaims God with the terua sound of the shofar. Bilaam acknowledges that he cannot curse Israel, therefore, no harm or woe will come to the Jewish people. The reason no harm or woe will come to them is that God dwells in their midst. Not only does God dwell in their midst, but Israel acclaims God. Israel affirms that God is their King and is in their midst. Bilaam understands, as he views the camp of Israel, at whose center is the Mishkan, that a people in whose midst God dwells cannot be cursed. This is the meaning of that most famous of phrases from the Oracles of Bilaam, "How fair are your tents, 'O Jacob, your dwellings, O'Israel?" Bilaam is referring to God's presence in the midst of Israel. There is but one God who is sovereign of all, and this God dwells in the midst of the Jewish people. The desert experience begins and ends with Pharaoh and Balak learning this lesson. The theme of Malhiyot thus begins to develop. There is only one God, and the Jewish claim about Him is universal and must be made to the nations of the world. God began the desert experience, having demonstrated to one heathen that there is only one God. Israel leaves the desert experience demonstrating to Bilaam that there is ought but one God.

The third Torah verse which serves Malhiyot reads: "Then he became King in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people assembled, the tribes of Israel together." (Dev. 33:5) This verse is chosen by the rabbis because of the way in which it is understood by the *Sifre*, the Tannaitic Midrash to the Book of Devarim. The *Sifre*, (Piska 346) concludes an essay on this verse as follows..."so, too, in this case, 'And there was a King in Jeshurun, all the tribes of Israel together.' God is King when they (Israel) form one, unified group; God is not King when they form several groups." This verse was chosen, because of the Midrash, to close the three Torah verses of Malhiyot. The first Torah verse in Malhiyot presents God who creates the natural order and is manifest in the world, in His power over nature. The second verse presents God who is manifest in this world in the community of Israel. And, the third verse is chosen because of the Midrash that sets a pre-requisite for God's presence in this world. If one dare say it, to use the words of the Midrash, God is King only when the people as one proclaim him as King. Thus, the belief in the unity of the Jewish people is a religious *sine qua non*, for the presence of God.

## Malhiyot – The Tehillim Verses

Once again, to merely recite the verse as quoted is to miss the point. The verses are quoted because they carry with them the full import of the chapter in Tanakh from which they come. This first verse is all-too-familiar. There is danger in the all-too-familiar verse, we become habituated to it, familiarity breeds ignorance and boredom. Its words are plain. We use them frequently. We too easily take the verse and its words for granted. This verse comes from Chapter 22 of Psalms. This verse is found in Psalms 22:29. For sovereignty is the Lord's and He rules the nations. When the Rabbis choose a verse, they mean us to understand it in the larger context in which it is found. The rabbinic selection of a verse in a given T'fillah is often understood by reference to the Midrashic understanding of the verse. Chapter 22 begins as follows:

> "For the choirmaster, upon the hind of the dawn, a song of David. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why so far from delivering me? Why so far from my anguished roaring? O my God, I call out at day and You do not respond, at nighttime, and I have no peace. And yet, You are sacred, You who are enthroned through the prayers of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You, and they escaped. They cried out to You and were saved. They trusted in You and they were not ashamed."

Contrasting God's response to his ancestors, David sets forth his lowly station in life, his terror, his plight. He is brought to the breaking point. He says in Verse 15 that his very life is "poured out like water." After he descends to the depths of human despair, he is still able, in Verse 20 of this Chapter, to once again turn to God and to declare,

> "But You, 'O God are not far off. My strength, hasten to my aid. Save my life from the sword, my precious life from the clutches of a dog."

As he regains his faith, he turns to the Jewish people and he summons them to do the same thing, because his faith, as stated in Verse 25, is that "God does not despise or loath the plea of the tormented." "God will not hide His face," because in the end, "the people will (see Verse 28) remember and return to God from the ends of the earth." When all people do this, Israel will be saved "for kingship is the Lord's and He rules the nations."

The Midrash assigns this Psalm to Esther. Upon the lips of Esther, this T'fillah takes on poignant meaning. It describes her odyssey from abandonment to victory over those who would destroy the Jewish people. This verse is meant to describe the spiritual odyssey of David and of every Jew. The lonely plight of the Jewish people, who in this world are at one with God and isolated from others who are not, will, in the end of days be resolved when all will come to know the one God. This provides a response to one of the central dilemmas of Jewish life. Prayers are always heard. Prayers are not always answered. One sometimes descends to the depths of despair. The one who longs for intimacy with the one God, at times feels abandoned. This Psalm begins with a pained

expression of the suffering of the person of faith in his or her loneliness. Then the Psalm takes a turn that is well known to people of faith, out of the depths of despair one does turn to God in faith. This personal affirmation is transformed by David into a world view. The Psalm, which begins with the experience of personal abandonment culminates in national and universal redemption.

In the face of so much alienation, in the face of so much refusal to accept the one God, how does one persevere? In the end, David holds out the promise that sovereignty is God's.

And yet there is another thought in this chapter of Psalms that begs expression. This Psalm contains that famous verse, *v'ato kadosh yoshev tehilot yisrael*, which reads, 'and yet You are sacred, You who are enthroned through the prayers of Israel.' This is a coronation verse. God is enthroned through the prayers of the Jewish people. Surely God's being is not dependent upon humanity. However God's sovereignty, as it says in the popular song *Adon Olam*, is dependant exclusively upon humanity and the Jewish people. Therefore, this selection of 22:29, assumes ever greater meaning. Once again the verse reads, for sovereignty is the Lord's and he rules the nations. This verse is explained by Rabbi Elijah, the Ga'on of Vilna, who parses the verse into two sections. The second half of the verse refers to God's rule over the nations of the world. This rule is imposed irrespective of their will. However the first section of the verse, using the intimate personal name of God, known only to Israel, says that to Hashem there is the sovereignty given to him by the Israel, through the consent of the governed.

The next verse of the three taken from Tehillim (Psalms), is once again all-too-familiar. This is Psalm 93, the Psalm for the sixth day of the week. It is also recited on Friday evening. "God is King. He is robed in grandeur; the Lord is robed, He is girded with strength. The world stands firm; it cannot be shaken." (Teh. 93:1) Tehillim 93 is a poetic commentary upon the narrative of Creation, found at the very beginning of the Torah. It describes the experience of the one God at the time when His spirit hovered over the primordial depths and at the time of the splitting of the waters into the waters above and the waters below on the second day of Creation, and on the third day of Creation when the waters were split and the dry land emerged. This chapter describes God as Creator, master of nature.

This Psalm says that despite the raging waters, despite the chaos which exists at the beginning of Creation, God is eternal and the material world is not. It is bound by time and space. This Psalm then presents another basic Jewish idea which is that while the material world is not eternal, the truth of the one God, the Torah and the mitzvot are. So, the first verse from Tehillim describes how one Jew remains faithful to the one God, encourages the Jewish people to do the same so that the nations of the world might and will come to know this truth in the end of days.

The second verse from Tehillim describes God as the Creator who is above and beyond His creation.

The third verse is also well known. It comes from the Psalm of the day for the first day of the week, and its theme is, the presence of God, the Shehina, entering the Temple of old.

The third verse is taken from Tehillim 24:7-10 – "O gates lift up your heads! Lift them up, you everlasting doors, so the King of Glory may come in! Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of Glory." This is the Psalm with which King Solomon welcomes and ushers in the presence of God to he newly-built Temple in Jerusalem. This is the Psalm recited when the Torah is returned to the Ark on Monday, Thursday and Shabbat afternoon. This, then, is the Psalm that ushers in the presence of the one God who dwells in Israel's midst.

The three verses from Tehillim give expression to three experiences of God as King.

1. The affirmation of God as King after the experience of abandonment and loneliness;
2. The affirmation that God is King because He is Creator. Sovereignty flows from Creatorship. This is the central theme of Rosh Hashanah;
3. And, if indeed God is King, then He must come to reside in our midst as He did in the Temple of old.

## Malhiyot – The Prophetic Verses

The next three verses are from the Prophets. The first verse is from Isaiah, the second from Ovadiah, and the third from Zechariah. The latter two prophesy during the period of the Second Temple. Isaiah prophesies about the Second Temple. Isaiah tells the Jewish people that God has made a declaration, "Thus said the Lord, the King of Israel, their redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last and there is no God but Me.'" (Isa. 44:6) Isaiah knows that after the Temple is destroyed it will be rebuilt. But he also knows that the Jewish people will be filled with despair. Through Isaiah, God must give new spirit and optimism to the Jewish people. Isaiah begins by telling Israel not to fear. She remains God's chosen people. God will, in the end, pour out His spirit on Israel's descendents. God knows that the Jewish people will look around at the mighty kingdoms of Babylonia and Persia and will wonder how is it that they, a small and exiled people, can ever return to the land. And, for them, God declares, "I am the first and I am the last and there is no God but Me." Everything is in the one God; all begins and ends with the one God. The powers of the nations and their small, petty gods should not be considered.

The rabbis then ask us, in assembling the verses, to consider *Ovadiah* who says that in the end of days when the Jewish people will be redeemed, "…liberators shall march up on Mount Zion to wreak judgment on Mount Esau; and dominion shall be the Lord's." (Ovadya 1:21) This is a guarantee to the Jewish people that judgment will take place in the end of days. The result of this is captured in the verse from Zechariah that the Jewish people can take comfort in the knowledge that in the end of days, God will be sovereign over all the earth, for in that day, God will be one and His name will be One. (Zachariah 14:9)

The hallmark of the Messianic Era is that the Name is one. God is one with God's name and that is known. This, then, is a vision of the end of days when God's sovereignty will be universal.

The closing verse, the 10th verse, is the only verse of the 10 verses selected for Malhiyot that does not have the word *Melech*-King in it. There is one opinion in the Talmud that speaks against the selection of this verse for Malhiyot. This verse is chosen because of the intimate link that it establishes between Israel and the one-liness of God. "Hear 'O Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is one." This verse is chosen because it fits thematically with the verse from Zechariah. The verse from Zechariah promises that the Name will be unified in the end of days. This can happen only if in this time and in this world the name is unified twice daily by the people in *yichud* with Hashem.

## Malhiyot – The Closing Essay

The closing essay for Malhiyot continues to develop the themes of Malhiyot. In the end of days, in the Messianic Era, all who have in them the breath of life, all who are fashioned by God, will come to know this simple fact, and will proclaim God as sovereign, thus continuing the link with Creation. The closing Braha was described above. It serves to close both Malhiyot and Kedushat Hayom.

# ZIHRONOT – REMEMBRANCE

**Pages 458 – 462**

## The Introduction

Zihronot's introductory essay is one of the oldest and most beautiful Tefillot that we have. The following from the Pesikta De-Rav Kahane is the Midrashic source of this essay:

> For ever, O Lord (of mercy), Thy word standeth fast in heaven (Ps. 119:89). In a Baraita, R. Eliezer taught: The creation of the world was begun on the twenty-fifth day of Elul. Rab's opinion (as expressed in his version of the Shofar Service) coincides with what R. Eliezer taught in the Baraita. In Rab's version of the Shofar Service it is said: "This day (of Tishri), when the intention of Thy works began to reveal itself (in the making of man), shall ever provide a reminder of (the judgment Thou didst

> pronounce) on the first New Year's Day, the day which, as decreed by Israel ever calls for judgment by the God of Jacob (Ps. 81:5). Hence, on the first day of Tishri, New Year's Day, sentence is pronounced upon the countries of the world – those destined for war and those destined for peace, those for famine and those for plenty, those for death and those for life; on this day the lives of mortals are scrutinized to determine who is to have life and who is to have death." (This pronouncing of divine sentence on New Year's Day is) a reminder to humanity that on New Year's Day, the day Adam was created, was the day he sinned and had divine sentence pronounced upon him. In the first hour of the Day, he came into existence as a thought in God's mind; in the second hour, God consulted the ministering angels (as to whether He should create him); in the third hour, God gathered up the dust from which He was to make him; in the fourth, God kneaded the dust; in the fifth, God jointed the parts; in the sixth, God stood Adam up as a thing yet incomplete; in the seventh, God put the bread of life into him; in the eighth, God brought him into the Garden of Eden; in the ninth, God gave him a command; in the tenth, he transgressed the command given him; in the eleventh, he was brought to judgment; in the twelfth, he went forth from the Holy One's presence a free man. The Holy One said to him: Let the fact that thou goest forth free be a sign for thy children. Even as thou camest into my presence for judgment on this day and didst go forth free, so will thy children come into My presence for judgment on this day and go forth free. When? (Year after year), In the seventh month, in the first day of the month (Lev. 23:24).

Rosh HaShannah is called Yom HaZikaron, Remembrance Day. The meaning of this name and its etiology is given artful and poetic treatment in the introductory essay. According to the Midrash, Rosh HaShannah is the sixth day of creation on which Adam and Eve are created. It is the day in which they are commanded not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. If they do, they will die. This same day they sin and are judged. God then commutes their sentence. They do not die.

As the Midrash concludes, God turns to Adam and tells him that such will be the case for his children, for all of humanity for all time.

> The Holy One said to him, "Let the fact that you go forth free be a sign for your children, even as you came into My presence for judgment on this day and go forth free. When? Year after year in the seventh month on the first day of the month." (Lev. 23,24)

Now that you have read this Midrash, the poetry of Zihronot and its allusions become clear. Zihronot is based on the following ideas of the Midrash:

- The first day of creation is the 25th of Elul.

- The sixth day of creation on which Adam and Eve are created is the first day of Tishrei, the seventh month.
- On the first of Tishrei, Adam is created, placed in the garden, instructed not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Adam sins, is judged, and has his sentence commuted.
- God then promises Adam and his descendents that his children will be treated as he was treated on Judgment Day, acquitted.

What is remembered in Zihronot is the narrative of creation, the sin of its central figure, Adam, God's acquittal of Adam and his promise to do the same for his children. It is possible to present a translation of Zihronot that weaves the Midrashic allusions into the text.

> "You (God) remember the creation acts of the universe, and You call to memory all those artfully fashioned (Adam) of old and of Eden. All that is hidden is revealed before You, as well as a wealth of mysteries from Bereshit, the beginning of creation. There is no forgetfulness in the presence of Your weighty throne, and there is nothing hidden before Your eyes. You remember everything that is activated, nothing artfully fashioned by Your hand is hidden from You. All is revealed and known before You, Lord our God, who peers and sees to the end of all time. When You bring forward the law of memory, in order to recall for judgment all in whom is found the breath of life; to be remembered are an infinite number of deeds and a whole host of creatures to no end are to be recalled. From the very beginning (Mei'reshit) did You make this known (to wit, the covenant referred to above in the Midrash that was made with Adam when he sinned, when he was judged, when he was acquitted), and from the very outset did You reveal this. This ay marks the beginning of Your creation and of Your creatures. It reminds us of that very first day (see the Midrashic description of Adam), for this is a law to Israel, the judgment rendered by the God of Jacob."

Thus, as Passover commemorates the Exodus and as Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah at Sinai, Rosh Hashanah commemorates the first mitzvah, the first transgression, the first judgment and the first commutation of sentence. For the Jew, Adam is the first forgiven and for the Christian, Adam is the first sinner. What God does for Adam on that very first Rosh Hashanah, is what God will do for Adam's children throughout all time.

God is described at the opening of this introductory essay as remembering all of creation. Note once again the word y'tsurei, creatures fashioned, which refers to the creation of human beings. Note as well the emphasis not only on God's absolute memory, but on the fact that He forgets nothing, that everything hidden, mysterious and secret is known by Him. This focus on secrets and mystery is based on the behavior of

Adam and Eve. The moment they sin, they hide. Hiding is the impulse of the sinner. We who are their children have the same impulse. A pre-requisite for judgment is omniscience.

The introductory essay then moves to the second paragraph. Here, we have introduced for the first time, the awe and dread of judgment. All peoples are the children of Adam, therefore all nations are judged on Rosh Hashanah. The introductory essay weaves its way into the second paragraph by declaring that when God remembers, He remembers for good.

## Zihronot – The Torah Verses

The first verse tells us that Noah was the first one remembered for redemption. There are two new ideas presented about Noah. The first is that his children, all humanity were given the promise of becoming as plentiful as the dust of the earth and the sand of the sea. The second is that Noah was remembered with love. These two statements are not found in the Torah narrative of Noah. They are T'fila as Midrash upon God's interaction with Noah. The message of this section is that all humanity are his children and should likewise be remembered for good. Then, Zihronot takes a remarkable turn. Until now, its focus has been universal. Until now, its words and ideas have been based on the narratives of the Torah about Adam and Noah, the parents of all humanity.

The first of the three Torah verses are universal, taken from the story of Noah. The next two verses are from the experience of the Jewish people.

The second verse is from the Book of Shemot 2:24. Its context is determinative. No where in that verse does it say that the Jewish people cried out to God. No where does it say that they prayed to God. They did not, because they did not yet know the one God. They could not turn to the one God, as Moshe did later, and invoke the Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, because they did not know it. As it says, "God heard their moaning and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Thus, at the outset of our relationship with the one God, Hashem promises us that even if we forget the Covenant, His commitment to us is so firm that He will remember it on our behalf.

The third verse taken from the Torah for Zihronot is Vayikra 26:42. It is no coincidence that the 10th Verse of Zihronot, which is also taken from the Torah, is from Vayikra 26:42-45. These two are of a piece. The full section reads as follows:

> Then I will remember my Covenant with Jacob; also my Covenant with Isaac and also my Covenant with Abraham, will I remember and I will remember the land. For the land shall be forsaken of them, making up for the sabbath years by being desolate of them, while they atone for their iniquity; for the abundant reason that they rejected My rules and spurned

> My laws. Yet, even then, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling My covenant with them; for I the Lord am their God. I will remember in their favor the Covenant with the ancients whom I freed from the Land of Egypt, in the sight of the nations, to be their God: I, am the Lord.

These Zihronot verses, from Vayikra 26, can only be understood by studying the full passage. What is the brit or oath made to the ancients? Who are the Rishonim-the first ones, the Ancients? This is the brit/oath, not always recognized, that Hashem makes with the Jewish people in Shemot 6:7. This oath states that the Jewish people will be God's people and God will be their God. When stated to the Jews enslaved in Egypt, "the ancient ones", it is unconditional, it is absolute. These verses are taken from the end of the Book of Vayikra from the Section of Rebukes; from the description of that time in Jewish history when much suffering and exile will have overtaken the Jewish people. And then, no matter what the Jewish people do, God will remember. What will God remember? God will remember the unconditional brit/oath that binds Him and the Jewish people together.

## Zihronot – The Tehillim Verses

We now move to the three verses from Tehillim. The first two verses are taken from Psalm 111, Verses 4 and 5. Psalm 111 is short. It has one theme. Because God remembers the Covenant He does remarkable things, such as providing mannah in the desert for the Jewish people to eat. Verses 4 and 5 read, "God made a remembrance of His wonders. God is gracious and compassionate. God gives food (in the desert) to those who fear Him. He is ever mindful of this Covenant. He remembers His Covenant, He gives food to those who fear Him." The third verse is from Psalm 106:45. Psalm 106 is one of several, long narrative Psalms that review the sacred history of Israel. Following the description of God, who was faithful to the Covenant while the people were not faithful, the Psalm concludes by declaring in Verse 45, nevertheless, "He (God) remembered His Covenant and in His faithfulness relented." God remembers the Covenant, God forgives Israel.

## Zihronot – The Prophetic Verses

The first verse is from Jeremiah 2:2, "The word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Go proclaim to Jerusalem: thus said the Lord: I remember to your favor the devotion of your youth, your perfect bridal love, how you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown.'" This recollection by Hashem of the youthful love of Israel for God, and the preciousness of such love is found in Jeremiah, sandwiched between passages of indictment of the Jewish people for their sins.

The second verse is from Ezekiel 16:60, "Nevertheless, I will remember the Covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish it with you as an

everlasting Covenant." This Verse 60 is preceded by another verse which reads, "Truly, thus said the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have dealt, for you have spurned the pact and violated the Covenant." This verse comes at the end of Chapter 16. Chapter 16 is a well-known chapter in the Book of Ezekiel. It is the chapter that begins with some of the most powerful, loving and erotic verses used in Tanakh to describe the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people. The first love of God and Israel is vividly described. "You were still naked and bare when I (God) passed over you and saw that your time for love had arrived, so I spread my cloak over you and covered your nakedness and I entered into a Covenant with you by oath...I bathed you in water and washed the blood off you...I clothed you with embroidery." This passion continues and abruptly ends. Verse 15 reads, "But confident in your beauty and fame, you played the harlot."

Then, in some of the most graphic and painful passages of indictment, Israel's perfidy and sinfulness is set forth. At the very end of this chapter, echoing God's first love of Israel, God's youthful love of first Israel we find Verse 60, which is used as the second of the three prophetic verses in Zihronot.

These two verses, the first two of the prophetic verses for Zihronot, both of which are found in the midst of chapters filled with indictment have to be understood. Why does a chapter filled with a recitation of our sins have in it such expressions of love? Why young, first love? Why are these passages quoted in Zihronot? The formula that best describes God's relationship with Israel when Israel sins is "irreversible judgment, irrepressible love." Israel should have known better. Israel is the redeemed people who heard the word of God at Sinai. Therefore, when Israel sins, her sins are most perfidious. Israel is a harlot worse than any other nation. Therefore, the judgment on Israel's sins is irreversible. At the same time, God's love for Israel is irrepressible. That love, as in common human experience, is best understood by referring to foundation events, to honeymoon seasons, to youthfulness. In other words, when there is nothing good to say in the merit of a sinner, one can always go back to the beginning of the relationship, to the youth of the person, and there, one can start over again based on the memory of that which was once pure.

The third verse is from Jeremiah 31:20. It is also found in the Haftarah for the second day of Rosh Hashanah. It is from Chapter 31 which begins with Hashem's word to the Jewish people through Jeremiah. Jeremiah is addressing those who have witnessed the destruction of the Temple, and he tells them, "The people, escaped from the sword, found favor in the wilderness; when Israel was marching homeward. The Lord revealed himself to me of old. Eternal love I conceived for you then, therefore, I continue my kindness to you." Here is a prophesy about the redemption from exile based on the youthful wilderness experience. Chapter 31 contains, in poetic, romantic language, Hashem's promise to the Jewish people that eternal love will prevail. The verse used in Zihronot, Verse 20, reads, "Truly Ephraim is a dear son to me, a child in whom I delight. Whenever I have spoken against him, my thoughts would dwell on him still. That is why my heart yearns for him. I will receive him back in love, declares the Lord."

The common theme of the three prophetic verses found in Zihronot is renewal of youthful love. We remind Hashem on Rosh Hashanah of His old promises to remember our first days together. The theme of the prophetic verses is our youthfulness and the recollection of the honeymoon stage in the history of God and the Jewish people.

So far, Zihronot has followed the basic pattern of the narrative of the Torah. The Torah begins with all of humanity. Humanity then becomes corrupt. God can no longer deal with Adam and the ensuing ten generations. They have failed. God can no longer deal with Noah and the ensuing ten generations. They have failed. So, the Torah moves from the universal to the particular, from all people to one family, from masses to individuals. After we encounter God's promise to remember Noah and Noah's children, with a universal oath embracing all humanity, Zihronot then turns, as the Torah does to the particular brit/oath that God has made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But, that oath is tested under the weight of Israel's sins, beginning with Israel's sins in the desert. Despite Israel's sins in the desert, God is faithful and sustains Israel in the desert. The brit/oath then must bear the weight of Israel's sins after entry into the land. And, in Tehillim 106:45 there is testimony to that. God does remember the Covenant despite Israel's sins.

The three verses from Nevi'im declare that in the end of days, God will renew His commitment to His Covenant with the Jewish people, as He remembers the Covenant made with them in their youth.

## Zihronot – The Closing Essay

The closing essay of Zihronot introduces a new theme, *Akeidat Yitschak*, the Binding of Isaac. The closing essay asks God to emulate Abraham, "Just as Abraham suppressed his compassion in order to fulfill Your will, so may Your compassion suppress Your anger against us." The introduction of the Akeidah in Zihronot is based on a Midrash.

> "The month which is sebi i" Rh. Berechaih called "the month of god's oath (sebu ah)," in which God swore to Abraham, saying, 'By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord," etc. (Gen 22:16). What need was there for such an oath? Because, according to R. Babai bar Rabbah, citing R. Johanan, our father Abraham said bluntly to the Holy One: Master of universes, it is revealed and known unto Thee that when Thou sadst to me, 'Take thy son, thine only one,' etc (Gen 22:2), there was in my heart an answer I could have given Thee. There was in my heart the temptation to say to Thee: Yesterday, thou didst tell me, 'In Isaac shall seed be called to thee' (Gen. 21:12), and now thou sayest to me 'Take thy son, thine only one.'

> Accordingly, even though in my heart I felt an impulse to argue with Thee, still I restrained myself and did not argue with Thee. Hence, when Isaac's children put their hands to transgressions and evil deeds, remember for their sake their father's being bound on the altar and be Thou filled with mercy for them; have Thou mercy upon them and turn for their sake the measure of justice into the measure of mercy." (It was then God swore to Abraham). When? (Year after year), 'In the seventh month.'" (Lev. 23:24).

It should be noted that no Jew may come before God and ask for forgiveness for his or her individual sins in the merit of the Binding of Isaac. Rather, we seek a good judgment for the collectivity of Israel based upon the merit of our common ancestor, Isaac. While the closing essay of Zihronot begins with the Akeidah, it turns, as do the other two sections of Musaf, to a closing verse from the Torah. The closing essay of Zihronot asks God to remember those words of the Torah found in Vayikra 26:45, which were explained above. In other words, the 10th verse of Zihronot which is from the Torah picks up an earlier theme. God made an unconditional brit/oath in Mitsrayim with our people, and in the end of days, that Covenant will be renewed. The closing Bracha, the *Hatima* for Zihronot is, "Blessed is God who remembers the brit/oath." In other words, Zihronot begins with an affirmation that God remembers all and forgets nothing; that we remember little; that we engage in a lot of sin and that our sins are not a mystery or a secret to God. Zihronot closes with a *quid pro quo* and essentially says to God, "Since You are the One before whom nothing is forgotten, not only should you remember our sins, but you should also remember our brit, the promises made to us."

# SHOFROT
## Pages 462 – 465
## The Introduction

Shofrot begins with a surprise. It is not Shavuot, and yet this, the third of the special additional prayers recited on Rosh Hashanah, begins with an eight-stanza poem upon the experience of revelation and Torah giving at Sinai. This poem sets forth the basic theme and experiences found in Chapters 19 and 20 of Shemot. God revealed Himself to the Jewish people from and in a thick cloud. This is based on 19:9 in which Hashem says to Moshe, "I will come to you in a thick cloud in order that people may hear when I speak with you..." A comprehensive understanding of this poem requires a full reading of Chapters 19 and 20. The poem describes what happened, as the Mechilta says, all nations and all nature trembled at the moment of revelation.

Many were the experiences of revelation. Israel at the simplest level meets God. Israel learns about God. God meets Israel. God speaks. Israel sees something. Israel receives the Torah. The Covenant is made. But, the focus of this poem is revelation itself, Israel's experience of God. The poem recreates for us the scene that day at Sinai, the sacred geography, the sacred ecology, the fire, the lightening, the thunder culminating in the statement "and to the sound of the shofar, You appeared to them." Here we have it. The first time the shofar is sounded in the Torah is when Israel experiences the revelation; when Israel receives the Torah; when Israel acknowledges God as sovereign. In short, the shofar is the music to revelation. It announces the arrival of God from heaven upon Mount Sinai, to give Torah to the Jewish people, to reveal Himself. Hence, shofar sounding is the music of coronation and is indeed the trumpeting act of coronation, of respect and of honor for the King.

## Shofrot – The Torah Verses

The three verses are taken from the narrative of Revelation at Sinai, Shemot 19:16-19 and 20:15. Each verse records the sounding of the shofar as the coronation music of Sinai. And, as it says in verse 19, the shofar is the music that sets the stage for the public dialogue between Moshe and the one God during revelation. It is the shofar that creates the atmosphere that announces the arrival of God. It is shofar sounding that is the act of coronation itself by the newly liberated slave people, who when they meet their Redeemer coronate Him as their Sovereign. Sinai is that reunion moment when God, who worked the miracles of the Ten Plagues, when God who split the sea, when God who marched Israel through the desert, is at a moment of reunion, of revelation, with people Israel. At the foot of Mount Sinai, God, who has worked these wonders as promised to Abraham is, because of His faithfulness, coronated by Israel as their God. If one dare say it, this is the Festival of Coronation, the festival of investiture.

## Shofrot – The Verses from Tehillim

The first verse is from Psalms 47:6. This is a coronation Psalm. For that reason, it is recited seven times prior to the sounding of the shofar. The verse in Shofrot reads, "God ascends, amidst the sound of the shofar, YHVH (ascends) with the shofar blast." This Psalm describes the coronation of God not just by the Jewish people, but by all humanity. Verse 2 reads, "All you peoples clap your hands, raise a joyous shout for God." The Psalm then moves on to declare in Verse 6, "God ascends midst acclamation, the Lord to the blasts of the horn." This is the most exact expression of the shofar as the musical instrument of coronation. This verse is then followed by songs of praise, at the moment of coronation, to the one God.

The rabbis select this verse for Shofrot because of a Midrash written upon it. This verse and the Midrash written upon it are the source of the foundation conception of Rosh Hashanah as the Day of Judgment.

> Judah bar Nahman, citing Resh Lakish, began his discourse thus: "The verse God ('Elohim) is gone up amidst a tremolo (teru ah)," etc. (Ps. 47:7) refers to the moment on New Year's Day when the Holy One, going up to sit on the throne of judgment, goes up with the intention of passing judgment without mercy: hence the words, God ('Elohim) is gone up amidst a tremolo (teru ah) (bespeak the fear and anguish that precede the rendering of His judgment) The instant, however, that Israel takes the shofar and sound the *tekiah*, (the sustained note, proclaiming redemption), the Holy One rises from the throne of judgment and takes His seat on the throne of mercy, as is said, Amidst this sound of the shofar the Lord will be (YHWH of mercy) filled with mercy for Israel and having mercy upon them again and again for their sake He turns the measure of judgment into the measure of mercy. When? Year after year, "In the seventh month." (Lev. 23:24)

This Midrash sets forth a bold idea. Israel through the mitsva of shofar sounding can move the Kadosh Barukh Hu from the Seat of Judgement to the Seat of Mercy. Why does God respond this way to shofar sounding? Why is god so moved by the sound of the shofar to be filled with mercy and to move from judgement to mercy? Now we know. The sovereign is so moved when His subjects coronate Him.

The second verse is Tehillim 98:6. This chapter in Tehillim describes the unity of all peoples and of nature, in acknowledging the one God, as creator. And, in the midst of a joyous summoning of nature, peoples and musical instruments to praise the one God, David declares, "With trumpets and a blast of the shofar, raise acclamation for YHVH the King."

The third verse is from Tehillim 81:4-5. "Sound the shofar at the moon's renewal at the time appointed for our festive day, this is a decree for Israel, a judgment of the God of Jacob." This Psalm is a summons to sing for God, and to be so filled with abandon in love of God, that musical instrument is taken up. In this case, the vehicle of musical expression is the shofar. The shofar is sounded on the New Moon. These verses are selected because the rabbis in the Midrash understand them to apply to Rosh Hashanah, the only holiday that falls at the beginning of the New Moon, all other holidays falling on the 15th of the month. As it says in the Midrash:

> R. Berechiah began his discourse with the verse "Blow the shofar at the New Moon –- when the crescent is not yet visible -- on our feast day," etc. (Ps. 81:4. But do not all other months (besides Tishri) begin with a New Moon? Yes—hence the verse goes on to specify that the shofar is to be blown when the crescent is not yet visible. But is not the crescent invisible on other new moons as well? Yes -- and for this very reason, the verse goes on to specify "on our feast day." But the fact is that Nisan as well as Tishri not only has a New Moon on which the crescent is invisible but also but also has a feast day. Nisan's feast, however, is by itself – (it takes place later on in the month). So there is only one New Moon which begins not only when the crescent of the new moon is still invisible, but also has a feast that falls on the very day of the New Moon. What month is that? Tishri. It is called Tishri because then Thou remittest (tisre) and forgivest our sins. When? Year after year, In the seventh month (Lev. 23:24).

The three verses from Psalms describe the regular use of the shofar in the present, in the daily life of Israel, as God is celebrated. It is for this reason that the fourth optional set of verses is added to the three from Tehillim. It is a full chapter in psalms. It is the closing chapter of Psalms. It is also that the chapter that closes the first half of the daily *pesukei d'zimra*. This Psalm, 150, is a fitting close to prayer and to the Book of Psalms itself, because it is a crescendo of musical praise of God. Participating in this crescendo is an orchestra of musical instruments, among them the shofar. One of the functions of the shofar in the present is to be one of a variety of musical instruments in praise of the one God.

## **Shofrot – The Prophetic Verses**

The first two verses are from Isaiah. The first verse from 18:3 is a summons to the nations of the world to gather in the end of days when the shofar is sounded. The second verse from Isaiah 27:13 is a vision of the end of days when the shofar will be sounded to announce the redemption of the Jewish people. And, the third verse is from Zechariah, who prophesies in the days of the second Temple. The shofar announces the arrival of the one God upon the mountain of Jerusalem. Having been summoned, He is then coronated with the sounding of the shofar. The three verses from the Prophets are about the redeemed world. Shofrot begins with the foundation experience of the Jewish

people at Sinai, moves to the Tehillim verses which describe the present time, and then to the prophetic verses which capture the end of days. Sacred history is set forth in its entirety.

The tenth verse, which once again is from the Torah, is taken from the Book of Bamidbar 10:10, and caps the closing essay. The closing essay is a paraphrase of the 10th blessing of the weekday Amidah. It is a prayer that the shofar be sounded to redeem the Jewish people. The verse from Bamidbar describes the regular life of Israel in the redeemed world, together with the one God when the shofar will be sounded at critical moments of celebration and offering in the Temple. The shofar, therefore, announces the completion of the redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt. At Sinai it is used in the present to both coronate God and to praise God, and in the redeemed world it summons the Jewish people home.

## Summary

We have seen that Malhiyot, Zihronot and Shofrot each have the same structure; an introductory essay, ten verses and a closing essay capped by a bracha. Each of the three sections has a distinct theme which it develops. For Malhiyot that theme is the movement from acknowledging the one God as King, because he is Creator at the beginning of time and space, to the moment in the end of days when evil regimes will be removed, idol worship will be brought to an end and all will come to acknowledge YHVH as the one God. Malhiyot, therefore, describes a Jewish view of sacred history.

Zihronot has two central themes, which are linked. God judges because God remembers and only one who has access to the full record can judge. God's judgment is based on God's having created, judged and exonerated Adam on the first Rosh Hashanah, the sixth day of Creation. Zihronot then develops the theme further and calls upon God who remembers in order to judge, to remember the brit, culminating in the prayer asking God to remember the renewed brit/oath made with Abraham at the binding of Isaac.

There are two critical themes to Shofrot. The first is shofar based on the experience of the revelation and coronation of God at Sinai, and the second is that the shofar encompasses the full, historic experience of the Jewish people at the dawn of Jewish history, marking liberation from Egypt and arrival at Sinai, celebrating God with praise and song in the present, and summoning the exiles back to Israel in the end of days.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a geography to Malhiyot, Zihronot and Shofrot. Each of them takes place upon a mountain. Malhiyot takes place upon the redeemed Mount Zion, where the judgment of the evil nations of the world will take place in the Messianic era. The focus of Zihronot is Mount Moriah, where the binding of Isaac took place. And, the focus of Shofrot is Sinai, the mountain of revelation. You can develop the meaning of this yourself.