



Resetting Our Clocks with the Shofar

by **Rabbi Dov Kaplan**

What is the first thing on our lips as we awake each morning? It should be the "Modeh Ani" prayer. Twelve Hebrew words meaning:

I thank you, living King, for You have returned my soul to me with compassion - abundant is Your faithfulness.

It never fails to inspire me! Every day it fills me with hope and confidence for I remember that there is something of divine importance for me to do in this world. God has deemed my life important enough to entrust me with another day. It doesn't get more optimistic than that!

The sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashana has the same significance.

Although we need to hear just a few notes blown from the ram's horn to fulfill the Torah's requirement, it is still the principal symbol of this season.

But what **is** the great importance of the shofar? How **does** it embody the essence of the holiday?

For an answer I quote Maimonides: He wrote about the shofar:

*"Rise up sleepers from your sleep,
awaken from your slumber".*

According to him the shofar is meant to be a wake-up call. Since last year, we have been lulled into drowsiness by our daily and weekly routines. Like a child on a merry-

go-round we have grown disorientated. Our actions have become mainly a result of inertia and we confuse our priorities. Therefore, on Rosh Hashana, Hashem calls to us through the shofar. God is telling us: "Awake to appreciate my world - my "Garden of Eden". I have faith in you and so have granted you another year of life.

This is the significance of the shofar. Just as the "Modeh Ani" serves as a reminder at the start of each day, so does the shofar remind us at the beginning of each year to wake up to the wonders in our lives. It's telling us that God has faith in us. We can appreciate the love and friendship in our lives. We can act with goodness and kindness. We do have the ability to perceive beauty and miracles in this world.

Through the shofar and through our prayers, we are filled with the hope that Hashem will trust each one of us enough to deliver another year into our care. But we need to get off the merry-go-round. We need to feel that, with the New Year, we are renewing our energies in order to start again, to promise ourselves (and God) that we will be better human beings.

I'd like to conclude with sincere wishes that Hashem bless us all, not just with a prosperous and healthy New Year, but with the wonder and gratitude that is the shofar's gift to us ●