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Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

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By: **A. Ben Ami**
Illustrations by: **Miri Weinreb**

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The Shofar that Wasn't Blown

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Rosh Hashana

The Shofar that Wasn't Blown

Erev Rosh Hashana morning in the Kugelbaum home

"Toot! Toot! TOOOOOOOOOT!"

Miri marched around the dining room blowing into the paper shofar she had made in school.

"Miri," said Menachem, covering his ears. "I don't think that sounds anything like a shofar."

"Yes it does!" said Miri. "Morah Chani said it's a shofar and I made it all by myself!"

She held it up proudly. It was made out of a rolled-up piece of construction paper, with colorful stickers all over it and a little plastic mouthpiece stuck to the end.

"Tomorrow's the first day of Rosh Hashana," said Miri excitedly, "and Morah Chani said that this year I'm big enough to go to shul to hear the real shofar – if Mommy lets! And she taught us that we have to be very, very quiet when they blow it. We practiced being quiet all week!"

"You practiced being quiet?" asked Meshulem, as he walked into the room.

"Yes!" Miri said. "Yesterday the whole class was quiet for almost a whole minute! Until Ruchi had to tell Morah that she can't find her ring and that she thinks it fell into her tuna fish during lunch and Chevy said that Zahava took away her new pencil and Leba sneezed and asked me for a tissue."

Menachem grinned. "Sounds like you're really ready. Well, I'm also excited for shofar. I've been practicing all summer with the shofar that Uncle Saadia bought me for my bar-mitzvah present." He hurried into his room and came back carrying an enormous, twisted Teimani shofar. It was almost as tall as he was.

"Here it is!" he announced proudly. "The biggest shofar in Brooklyn and it makes the loudest tekiah!"

Mommy looked at Menachem wearily, "Yes, Nachi, we know all about it," she said. "The entire neighborhood knows."

"Especially Mr. Friedman upstairs," said Meshulem. "Yesterday he came down and asked Mommy if there was an elephant trapped in our apartment."

"He did not!" said Menachem.

"OK," admitted Meshulem. "But he was thinking it."

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"Well," said Menachem, "I have to practice if I want to do it well. Maybe one day I'll be the baal tokeia."

"That's wonderful," said Totty. "But remember, we won't be blowing shofar tomorrow."

Menachem stopped smiling. "Oh, right. I forgot about that."

Miri looked up from the floor where she was sitting and readjusting the stickers on her shofar. She stared at Totty with a confused look.

"No shofar?"

"No shofar," Totty said.

"But Morah Chani said—"

"I know," Totty said. "But this year Rosh Hashana is on Shabbos and we're not allowed to blow shofar on Shabbos. We have to wait till Sunday."

"Yeah, Rebbi taught us all about that," said Menachem. "He said the Chachomim say we can't blow shofar on Shabbos because someone might forget and carry it to shul."

Meshulem picked up Menachem's giant Teimani shofar and tried lifting it onto his shoulder. "Well, nobody is going to accidentally carry this one," he said. "You'd need a moving truck. And Miri's shofar, we can fold it up and leave it in your Tallis bag in shul before Shabbos so there's nothing to worry about."

"True, very true," said Totty, "but we're worried that maybe someone, even one Jew in a far out place, might forget and make a mistake."

Meshulem looked confused. "That's it?"

"That's it."

"But Totty!" Meshulem protested. "It's the mitzvah of shofar! It's Rosh Hashana! The Torah tells us to blow the shofar, and the whole Am Yisroel is waiting for that. We're going

to proclaim Hashem the King with the shofar blasts! And we'll give that up because maybe somebody somewhere might carry a shofar?"

Totty smiled.

"That's an excellent question. But the answer is even better. You know what Chazal are teaching us by telling us not to blow it on Shabbos? They're teaching us how important Shabbos is. Shabbos is a special connection with Hashem that no other people have. It's not just a day off. It's the day we don't do any melacha because we're testifying to the whole world that Hashem made the whole universe and everything in it in six days. No matter what happens in the world, Shabbos means that we're going to be loyal forever to Hashem.

"And therefore Chazal said that even for the great mitzvah of shofar, we won't take a chance that even one Jew might come to carry on Shabbos.

"Shabbos is just too precious to risk. And when something is that precious, you protect every part of it, even the smallest thing."

"Well," Menachem said, "I guess I'll wait till Sunday to blow my shofar. By not blowing shofar on Shabbos I'll be showing how precious Shabbos is."

Little Miri looked at the paper shofar in her hand and she carefully put it down on the table.

"I'm not blowing mine either," she announced.

"You can blow your paper shofar," Meshulem said. "That's not a real shofar."

Miri shook her head firmly.

"No. Totty said Shabbos is too princess."

"Precious," corrected Meshulem.

"That's what I said. Too princess. And if I wait till Sunday, I'll also be learning the lesson that Shabbos is more important than anything else."

RABBI MILLER SPEAKS

"Shabbos is too important and precious for us to risk – even one little part of it. Shabbos is the soul of the Jewish nation and it's worth every sacrifice, even to give up blowing shofar."

– September 1973

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