

# Rosh Hashanah Story: The Call of the Shofar

Once upon a time there lived a poor orphan, who had neither father nor mother. His name was Moshe, but because he was a small boy and an orphan, everybody called him "Moshele." As long as he was still a little boy, he went to cheder, where he learned Chumash and Gemara together with the other children, but when he grew a little older, he had to go out and earn his livelihood. So, a collection was made to provide him with a basketful of merchandise, such as needles, buttons, and other trinkets, and Moshele set out to sell them to the peasants and farmers in the villages and hamlets that surrounded his native town.

It was a very hard job, of course. In the summer, the heat was unbearable, and in the winter the snow and icy winds often made his teeth chatter. But Moshele did not mind. His only regret was that he could not go to the yeshivah, for he wanted to become a scholar.

One wintry day Moshele was trudging along on a snow-covered road, with his basketful of merchandise under his arm. He knew some Tehillim by heart, and he recited them cheerily as he walked. Snow kept on falling from the grey skies, and soon he found himself plodding ankle-deep in snow. It was getting difficult to walk, and it was even more difficult to follow the road, which was now completely covered with snow as far as the eye could see.

Unwittingly he strayed off the road, and presently found himself in a little wood. Moshele felt very tired and decided to have a little rest. He noticed a big stump and sat down on it, placing his basket down on the snow. "No, you must not fall asleep," he kept on telling himself, "it is very dangerous; you might freeze to death!" So, he sat there huddled up and shivering, trying in vain to keep himself warm and his eyes open.

A peasant passing on the road in his sledge noticed the huddled figure of a lad almost fully covered with snow. He stopped his horse and ran to the body. Brushing the snow off, he found that the body was almost frozen stiff, with no sign of life.

Without losing time, the peasant set to work. He started to rub the

boy briskly with snow. After half an hour's work the blood began to flow in the young body again, and the boy stirred. The peasant then carried the lad to his sledge, covered him up, and drove his horse as fast as he could to his home in the nearby village. There he again rubbed the body of the lad with snow, until his skin began to glow, and finally poured some hot brandy down the lad's throat. Moshele opened his eyes and closed them again. Thereupon the peasant carried him onto the oven and covered him up snugly. Moshele fell asleep.

The crowing of the rooster woke him up very early next morning. Moshele opened his eyes and looked around. He could not understand where he was, and why so many pins and needles were pricking him all over his body.

The farmer's wife was up and came up to see him. "How do you feel?" she asked him in Russian, for she was a Russian peasant woman. "All right," Moshele said, still wondering what had happened to him. The woman boiled up some tea for him, and he drank it gratefully.

"What is your name?" she asked him.

Moshele tried to think hard but could not remember. "I don't know," he said, thinking how strange it was that he could not remember his own name.

"Never mind," said the peasant woman, "we'll call you Peter."

Thus Moshele, or Peter as he was now called by all, remained in the peasant's home, little knowing that he was a Jewish boy and did not belong there at all.

When summer came, Peter helped the farmer in all the work in the field: ploughing, sowing, and reaping. Peter was an industrious, capable lad, and the farmer was very pleased with him.

The summer passed by and autumn came. One day the farmer said to Peter: "Tomorrow we shall drive to town and take some of our products to the market."

Peter was very glad and looked forward to seeing the town. When they finally got there the next day, the marketplace and all the streets were deserted. When they passed by the synagogue, they saw it was crowded with worshippers, and the peasant realized that it was a Jewish holiday. There was nothing to do but to drive

back home. But Peter was fascinated by the quaint synagogue and begged the peasant to stay in town a while. "Very good, then," said the peasant, "you will meet me in the public house," and he went to have a drink, while Peter felt an irresistible desire to look into the synagogue.

Peter came in quietly and stood by the door. The worshippers wrapped in prayer shawls seemed very intent on their prayers; many of them were weeping. No one paid any attention to him. Peter looked closely around him. His heart began to beat faster. Somehow the scene was familiar to him. Had he ever been here before? Slowly his memory returned to him, as everything in the synagogue brought new memories into his conscience. The tune and melodies of the cantor were familiar to him. The scrolls of the Torah that had just been brought out of the ark were familiar too. As if glued to his place, Peter stood motionless and stared . . .

Peter did not know how long he stood there, but presently he noticed a little excitement among the worshippers. The very air appeared to become tense with sacred animation, as if angels were fluttering in the air. Peter was transfixed with awe.

The silence was broken by the shaking voice of the aged cantor, and immediately the entire community joined in fervent prayer. For some time, the roar of the whole community praying seemed to shake the very walls of the synagogue, and then it began to subside gradually, until a solemn silence fell again. In the stillness of the air the sobbing of the cantor became clearly audible, and Peter found himself weeping too.

Suddenly he heard—tekiah-ah-ah—and the blast of the ram's horn pierced the air. Shevarim . . . teruah—and again the broken sound of the shofar seemed to stab Peter's heart. Tekiah-ah-ah—the shofar called again . . .

"Moshele, you are a Jew," the shofar called. "Moshele, you are a Jew! Hurry now . . . Now is the time to return to G-d . . . Tekiah-ah . . . . Teruah-ah-ah . . . "

Everything now became very clear to Moshele . . .

"Dear G-d, forgive me," Moshele cried, and fainted.

## Welcome to the Rosh Hashanah Smartphone Quiz Game!

The catch is.... You can't use your smartphone! All year long this info is at the tip of your fingers, and thus not a challenging quiz! This time, however, you will need to count on your memory, estimation capabilities, guessing skills and lots of luck.

Good Luck!

#### Stage 1- Google search results:

Which topic has more search results on Google?

Apple or Honey?

Rosh Hashana or Shofar?

Jewish or Israel?

Kippah or Tallit?

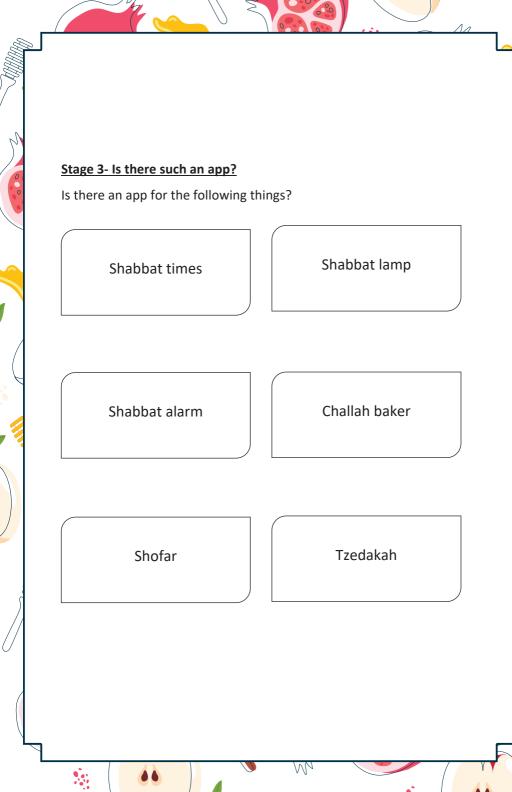
Gefilte fish or Pomegranate?

Chabad or Chutzpah?

Hava Nagila or Hatikvah?

Bissli or Bamba?

# Stage 2- Is this a Wikipedia topic? Is there a Wikipedia page for the following topics? Kosher Pork? Yiddishe Mame? Kosher salt? Jewish atheism? Chicken soup? Song of Hannah?



#### **Answers:**

### Stage 1 Google search results:

Apple= 3,830,000,000 results Honey= 1,010,000,000 results

Rosh Hashanah= 9,970,000 results Shofar= 5.460.000 results

Jewish= 306,000,000 results Israel= 1,410,000,000 results

Kippah= 1,900,000 results Tallit= 2,500,000 results

Gefilte fish= 1,320,000 results Pomegranate= 72,600,000 results

Chutzpah= 1,870,000 results Chabad= 6,660,000 results

Hava Nagila= 1,010,000 results Hatikvah= 501,000 results

Bissli= 59,700 results Bamba= 368.000 results

## Stage 2 Is this a Wikipedia topic?

Yiddishe Mame: No, but there is a topic on a song called 'My Yiddishe Mame'.

Kosher Pork: Nope.

Kosher salt: Yes- "Koshering salt, usually referred to as kosher salt in the US, is a variety of edible salt with

a much larger grain size than some common table salt."

Jewish atheism: Yes- "Jewish atheism refers to the atheism of people who are ethnically and (at least to some extent) culturally Jewish."

Chicken soup: Yes, duh!

Song of Hannah: Yes- This is the prayer Chana praised Hashem with after the birth of her son and the haftarah for first day Rosh Hashana.

#### Stage 3 Is there such an app?

Shabbat times: Yes. It informs you about candle lighting times and when Shabbat ends in your location.

Shabbat alarm: Yes. You can change the settings to decide how long it rings for before turning itself off.

Shabbat lamp: Yes. It shuts off at a pre-set time without pressing any buttons.

Challah baker: No. No app will bake your challah, sorry.

Tzedakah: Yes. It's called Clink! It allows you to decide which charity to send your tzedakah to.

Shofar? Yes, many. However, none of them can substitute hearing shofar on Rosh Hashanah.