

**Next Year in Jerusalem; A Story for Rosh Hashana  
By Hagit Aharonof**

**The year was 1970.**

**Boris is an 8 year-old Jewish boy. He doesn't live in Israel. He lives in Russia. Boris has beautiful shining black eyes. But lately his eyes have been sad. Boris is worried.**

**Why is he worried? Is it because his friends don't play with him? Is it because his little sister Irena is annoyed at him?**

**No, that's not the reason. Boris' friends like him very much and include him in all their games. Irena, his cute little four year-old sister, loves him very much. So what is he worried about?**

**Boris doesn't want to say. When someone asks him, "Boris, what happened?" , he doesn't answer. He just shakes his head and walks away.**

**B**

**Anatoly is Boris' best friend. They tell each other everything.**

**One day Anatoly told Boris: "I found a book at home written in a foreign language. My father said the book is in Hebrew and that I shouldn't tell anyone that we have a Hebrew book at home."**

**Boris understood. He knew that Jews in Russia were not allowed to study Hebrew, that they were not allowed to hold meetings, and that even going to pray at the synagogue –was very dangerous.**

**"Where did the book come from?" Boris asked. And in his heart, he thought he knew the answer.**

**"My father didn't tell me," Anatoly answered. He hesitated, and then went on , "But I think I know". Now Boris was certain. "From Eretz Yisrael," he whispered and his cheeks burned with excitement.**

**"From E-retz Yis-ra-el," Anatoly repeated.**

**"And it's not just any old book," Anatoly continued to confide. "It's a prayer book for Rosh Hashana. My father promised to teach me to read it after he learns Hebrew himself."**

**And that is what happened. Anatoly's father learned Hebrew, and exactly one year later, Boris and Anatoly began to learn Hebrew from that same Rosh Hashana prayer book. It was the only book in Hebrew in the whole Jewish community.**

**Since then, Boris and Aantoly have a secret. They study Hebrew in secret. And who is their teacher? None other than Anatoly's father.**

**C**

**In two days it will be Rosh Hashana. Boris is very excited. He knows how to read Hebrew. This year he will sit next to his father at prayers and can even read a little from the prayer book. But there is one thing that is bothering him. Where will they get a shofar?**

**There's a rumor going around: a shofar was sent from Israel. But the shofar never arrived. Maybe the Russians found out about it? Maybe the package was delayed in the mail?**

**No one knows. No one is talking about it.**

**Maybe the parents are discussing it among themselves but they are not telling the children anything. They don't trust them. They are afraid the children will talk.**

### **D**

**Rosh Hashana has arrived. Boris has never seen so many people swarming to the synagogue and everyone is dressed in white.**

**Their eyes reflect the joy of the holiday but in their hearts, deep down, they are afraid. They walk in silence. Every once in a while someone casts a glance over his shoulder as if to ask, "Is anyone following us?"**

**Will we get through the prayers without any problems?"**

### **E**

**The synagogue is packed. Boris has a special feeling inside. Everything is so festive, people are so serious. They are praying so solemnly.**

**He listens to the sounds of the prayer and he thinks:**

**All the people are praying in a whisper and yet, you can hear voices. Voices like you never hear anywhere else. It's the sound of many whispers. It's the sound of many prayers.**

**Every once in a while, a sound would rise up above the others, a sigh, and then all would go back to a loud whisper.**

**Suddenly, there was complete silence. Boris hears the silence. The silence of holiness. What happened?**

**Boris looks at the congregation praying and suddenly his eyes open wide in surprise. No one is moving. Everyone is standing wrapped in their tallit and looking at the reader's stand. Who is that standing next to the hazan?**

**It's his father, Boris' father! He is reciting the blessing over the shofar and now he is taking the shofar and lifting it to his to his lips.**

**Boris feels his heart thumping loudly. He looks around him nervously. Maybe other people can hear his heart pounding...**

**"G-d, make the sounds come out of the shofar," Boris prays silently. "Let the sounds come out loud and clear..."As he stands there in thought, a great sound bursts forth. It is the sound of the shofar. And listen, the shofar has many sounds. One- long and loud and alarming. A sound that pierces the heart. This sound is rising right up to heavens and opening the gates of heaven . And now that the gates are open, all of the prayers can enter and go straight to G-d.**

**But that is not the only sound the shofar makes. Now he hears other sounds, broken sounds as though the shofar is weeping. And Boris feels that his heart is weeping along with the shofar. He is remembering all the bad things that**

he has done and he is sorry. He is truly sorry for them. "G-d please forgive me," Boris prays, "Remember how righteous our forefather Abraham was and forgive me." And then he whispers three words: 'Leshana ha-ba'a b'yerushalaim - Next year in Jerusalem.' He says these words with feeling, thinking about what they mean, and he says them with great love. Suddenly he hears a great sound like an echo: Next year in Jerusalem. Somebody heard him. Somebody answered him. But Boris cannot see who it is because suddenly his shining black eyes are filled with tears.

## F

Boris is still excited and thrilled by the shofar, by the prayers. He looks into the prayer book but it is hard for him to concentrate now. The question keeps flashing through his mind:

"How did my father get that shofar?"

He was so involved in his thoughts that he didn't notice that the prayers were over.

Suddenly he felt a gentle hand on his head. He looked up to see his father standing there, a broad smile on his face. His eyes were dancing and his face was lit up.

And his father was saying to him: "Next year in Jerusalem, son".

Now his father placed the shofar carefully inside his tallit bag. He told Boris, "This shofar comes from Jerusalem. We will leave it here in Russia. When this shofar returns to Jerusalem, it will be a sign that all of our lost brothers have come back home. Because our forefathers made an oath: The last of our children to go to Eretz Yisrael will bring this shofar back with him.

Then his father closed his eyes and said with great feeling, "U'va le-Zion go'el" /And G-d will send a redeemer to Zion".