



by Michael T. Chusid

**Volume One – The Call of the High Holy Days**

**Volume Two – For the Shofar Blower**

**Volume Three – The People of the Ram**

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## About the Author

**Michael T. Chusid** blows his shofar in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles, California where he is *ba'al tekiah* – shofar master blaster – at [Makom Ohr Shalom](#) Synagogue. His paternal grandfather, Ben Chusid, immigrated to the United States from Breslov, Ukraine and revealed that Michael is a tenth generation descendent from Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, a revered teacher of Jewish spirituality and great-grandson of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*, the founder of Hasidic Judaism. The Rebbe's final teaching was on the shofar.<sup>1</sup> The author notes that this book, his first foray into spiritual teaching, is on the same topic and prays the he be worthy of the *yichus* – family heritage.



Michael is a father, stepfather, and husband. He is also an architect, a Fellow of the [Construction Specifications Institute](#), and a Certified Construction Specifier. His company, Chusid Associates ([www.chusid.com](http://www.chusid.com)) provides marketing and architectural consultations to building product manufacturers, and he blogs at [www.BuildingProductMarketing.com](http://www.BuildingProductMarketing.com).

He has taught shofar at the American Jewish University and Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, California, conducts workshops for synagogue, community and private groups, and participates in a [Shofar Corp](#) that sounds shofar for the the sick and confined.

Information on his classes and other information on the shofar can be found at [www.HearingShofar.com](http://www.HearingShofar.com) and [www.blog.HearingShofar.com](http://www.blog.HearingShofar.com).

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<sup>1</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *Until the Mashiach: The Life of Rabbi Nachman* (Breslov Research Institute, 1985), pg. 199. Reb Nachman's teaching, "Sound the Shofar - Reproof" (Likutey Moharan II, 8), "looks forward to the future, when the world will come to the knowledge of God and all will recognize that everything is under God's providence. Through the power of the prayers of the outstanding Tzaddik, the Master of Prayer, God's glory will be revealed. Prophecy will come into the world, and through it our faith will be cleansed and purified, and we will come to see that everything around us is all miracles." This summary is from Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum, *The Wings of the Sun: Traditional Jewish Healing in Theory and Practice*, Chapter 9 – "Sound the Shofar," <http://www.azamra.org/Heal/Wings/09.htm> March 31, 2009.

## Endorsements

“Michael Chusid is the mouthpiece of the shofar.”

*Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi*

“Chusid...has taught hundreds of people since he discovered...that sharing the sacred horn’s joys and mysteries was his calling... Although he emphasizes that blowing the shofar is a religious practice, not a performance, Chusid has the skill, the control, and the soul of an artist.”

*Los Angeles Times*

“Chusid...the Master Blaster has a gentle, authoritative air.”

*The Jewish Journal*

“Michael Chusid...perceives the many dimensions of the shofar like one perceives the many facets of a diamond. This is the most comprehensive work on the shofar I have ever seen and I highly recommend it to anyone who has ever been touched by the sound of the shofar.”

*Rabbi Stan Levy, President, Academy for Jewish Religion, California*

“Thank you for your beautiful work in bringing the call of the shofar out to the world. On this day of Rosh Chodesh Elul, I send you special blessings for your practice. May the whole world be awakened!”

*Rabbi Shefa Gold, C-DEEP - Center for Devotional, Energy, & Ecstatic Practice*

“I am deeply impressed by the extensive research you have done, revealing the obvious passion you have for your subject. You've done an amazing job of presenting marvelous teachings and beautiful stories connected with the sweet and mysterious experience of hearing shofar, and you offer clear instructions on the way to bring one's heart into the sounding of the ram's horn. It gives the reader deep insights into aspects of Judaism that are not well known. I highly recommend this book, it opens up a whole new dimension of reality.”

*Rabbi David A Cooper, author of God is a Verb*

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Cover artwork by Sandra Goodman, revised by Will Shersood.

The author welcomes your comments, corrections, and feedback. He can be reached through [www.HearingShofar.com](http://www.HearingShofar.com).

## Acknowledgements

*“He who is able to write a book and does not write it is as one who has lost a child.”*

*“A man should know even in study when he has attained sufficiency. He should not attempt to study too much lest he become confused; he cannot learn all there is to be known.”<sup>2</sup>*

This book would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of my teachers. I especially recognize [Reb Zalman Schacter-Shalomi](#) who inspired the renewal of Judaism within me as well as within an entire generation, [Rabbi Debra Orenstein](#), spiritual leader of *Makom Ohr Shalom*, who very gently led me deeper into my studies, and [Rabbi Moshe Halfon](#) who has wrestled with me both in *Torah* and in life. I am grateful, too, for the love of my sister, Hanna Chusid, who was my first and most influential *Torah* study partner.

[Makom Ohr Shalom](#) – a Los Angeles, California congregation that “celebrates the Jewish traditions of meditation and spirituality” gave me a *makom* (place) where I could mature from a “green horn” to a “master blaster.” The community also rose to the challenge of organizing a community-wide “[Shofar Corps](#)” to blow shofar for the ill and confined. The [American Jewish University](#), Bel Air, California, gave me the chance to teach shofar classes where I could refine my understanding of shofar by getting feedback from students. And I am blessed with many friends and associates who shared their wisdom and enthusiasm to support this project.

Most of all, I express gratitude for Sandra Goodman, my wife. “Who can count her worth!”<sup>3</sup> Her patience and generosity of spirit made it possible for me to spend the many evenings and weekends given over to researching and writing this book. When I blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah, her smile radiating out of the congregation is all the proof I ask that my shofar blasts have been accepted upon high.

Michael T. Chusid  
Selichot 5769 – 12 September 2009

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, translation by Newman and Spitz, *Hasidic Anthology* as quoted in *The Wisdom of Israel*, Lewis Browne, 1945, page 560 and 565.

<sup>3</sup> *Proverbs* 31:10.

## Forward by Rabbi Dr. Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi

Dear Friends,

Shofar is an ancient yet ever-renewing way to surf our own intra-nets; hearing its blasts can rewire our internal programs to return to a healthier and more natural alignment with the Divine. Our opportunity is not only to *blow* shofar, but also to *know* shofar.

I have heard Michael Chusid blow shofar on the High Holy Days for over a decade. Each year, his blasts become more soulful and heart felt. And his awesome *tekiah gedolah*, the long blast of the shofar, *Oy!* How his shofar blasts open the Gates of Heaven so our cries and prayers can reach God!

Through his commitment to shofar, his profound teachings about its spiritual meanings, and his enthusiasm for helping others awaken and hear the voice of shofar, Michael has earned his title as *Ba'al Tekiah* – Master Blaster of the shofar.

Michael's book and classes on shofar fill an important place in the contemporary search for spiritual meaning. Michael respectfully transmits the traditions, laws and legends of shofar. Then he goes beyond to explain how shofar remains an important technology for connecting us with the Divine in this modern age. He explores shofar through the lenses of meditation, psychology, anthropology, acoustics, the yoga of breathing, creative ritual, and the choreography of the High Holy Days services, to help us hear and understand shofar's hidden code and secret meanings.

There is a misconception that the shofar is difficult to blow. Michael's step-by-step instructions, however, make it simple to awaken the voice of the shofar and he has taught hundreds of people, from age six to eighty-six, to sound the horn. In addition to practical tips for making and using the shofar, he keeps our focus on *kavanah*, the spiritual intention to hear shofar as a call for *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzadakah* – repentance, prayer, and justice – the three paths by which we temper the severity of the harsh decree when we stand before the Judge on the High Holy Days.

To get the most spiritual renewal from the Days of Awe, we must first do our homework. We are given Elul, the Hebrew month before Rosh Hashanah, to take stock of ourselves, make amends, and forgive others and ourselves. Michael offers a set of powerful meditations, one for each day of Elul, that will help you hear the nuances of the shofar's wake-up call. May they inspire you towards repentance so the Judgment upon you will be for good.

Perhaps, above all this, Michael's sharing of his personal experience of shofar serves as an example of the very process of *teshuvah* – the spiritual shift – from feeling like an outsider to tradition and spirit, to coming home to one's self and God-intimacy. By embracing shofar, he has rediscovered a practice that provides a clear, open channel to the Eternal.

Michael Chusid is a descendent of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, the great Hasidic master. Like his forefather, Michael weaves together *midrash*, story telling, and passion to dance to a holy tune. Reb Nachman teaches that sincere dedication to fulfilling even one *Torah mitzvah* opens the gate to fulfillment of all *mitzvot*. By following his heart into the depth, richness and subtleties of the *mitzvah* of *l'smoah shofar* – hearing shofar – Michael is well on his way to exemplifying this teaching.

May all who read, peruse, or study these pages be equally blessed to connect with the primal sound of shofar, and may its sound clear the way for you to find your own unique calling and *mitzvah* practice – the one that opens the gates to your own knowledge of God-intimacy.

May we all be inscribed into the Book of Life for a year of Blessings,

Reb Zalman

*Rabbi Dr. Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi is Professor Emeritus and Past Holder of the World Wisdom Chair at Naropa University ([www.naropa.edu](http://www.naropa.edu)), Rabbinic Chair of ALEPH Alliance for Jewish Renewal ([www.aleph.org](http://www.aleph.org)), and Founder of the Spiritual Eldering Institute. Additional information about Reb Zalman can be found at The Reb Zalman Legacy Project, ([www.rzlp.org](http://www.rzlp.org)).*

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