


**CHABAD**  
  
**RESEARCH UNIT**

שבת..... *for Friday nights* ..... קדש

Friday 18 September 2009 - Eve of Rosh Hashana 5770  
 Rosh Hashana - The New Year

**THE SILENT SHOFAR**

**T**HE SOUL IS CONNECTED WITH G-D AND IS EVEN DESCRIBED AS CONTAINING A SPARK of G-dliness. Hence through the fact that the soul inhabits our body, dwelling in this fascinating complex world, it is able to play a unique role of balancing and mediating Existence with its infinite Source.

One important way it achieves this takes place on Rosh HaShanah, the festival of the New Year, commemorating the creation of the universe and, most particularly, the day that Adam and Eve were created, with the task of connecting themselves and everything around them to G-d. They achieved this by recognising G-d as King and by bonding with Him.

In a sense, Adam and Eve represented existence as a whole. Their bodies were sustained by the air, the water and the food from the world around them. Their step of recognition of G-d therefore included all existence as well. Existence recognised G-d. Creation recognised its Creator. It was a crucial moment.

Through the generations we repeat this act of recognition and bonding every Rosh Hashanah. There is awe and humility, for we sense our own frailty. There is also love. We express this renewal of our connection with G-d by blowing the Shofar, the ram's horn. The simple, brute note of the Shofar is like a cry from deep within the



In Memory of Mrs Chawa (Evelyn) Loewenthal ע"ה  
 Passed away Rosh Hashana 5752

117 GEORGE STREET, LONDON W1H 7HF  
[cru@lubavitchuk.com](mailto:cru@lubavitchuk.com) - [www.chabadresearch.org](http://www.chabadresearch.org)

heart. We could think of it as a wordless expression of surrender of self, letting go, dissolving in all encompassing G-dliness.

This year, the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. Hence, the Sages instruct us, on that day we do not blow the Shofar. The Talmud records this as being on account of concern for the holiness of Shabbat<sup>1</sup>. Chassidic teachings go a step further and say that since it is Shabbat, the Shofar does not need to be blown.

The inner meaning of the sound of the Shofar is its expression of surrender of self before G-d. In fact, Shabbat too expresses selflessness. Shabbat is the day of sacred delight, when our self merges with holiness. On Shabbat we have the spiritual power to achieve a higher level in the call of the Shofar: we can sound *the silent Shofar*.

The call of the silent Shofar bonds us and all existence with G-d, beyond self, beyond being. There is awe, in which any sense of ego is stilled. There is oneness with the Divine.

Can there be more than this? Well, in the Temple, even when Rosh HaShanah falls on Shabbat, the Shofar *was sounded*. In the *unique* atmosphere of the Temple one can make a step even beyond the silent Shofar. In the Temple the ego does not have to be stilled or surrendered. One does not have to reach for oneness by dissolving away. In the Temple all is one with G-d.

Hence in the Temple, we can sound the pure, clear notes of the Shofar, even on Shabbat. And all will be one, without effort. In the time of the Messiah and the Temple in Jerusalem, the world itself - as a physical world - will express the Divine<sup>2</sup>.

So, on Shabbat, the first day of Rosh HaShanah this year, let us be aware of the call of the silent Shofar. It is very precious, bonding us to G-d in a wonderful way. Then, on Sunday, the second day, the tangible, physical Shofar is sounded. And may G-d respond to both with blessings of goodness and sweetness, peace, health, abundance and joy.

1. One might come to carry the Shofar in the street. See Rosh Hashana 29b. 2. Based freely on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Sefer HaSichot* 5749 p.704-706.

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## ROSH HASHANA

### **POWER TO CHANGE**

It was the first science class of the year. Sara sat on her stool jiggling her foot. Science was *not* her favourite subject, and it hadn't been since the unfortunate sweet potato incident. When the class had returned after the winter holidays last year, their sweet potatoes had sprouted into a row of beautiful plants on the windowsill, and then there was the one mouldy mess: Sara's. It even had a bad smell that wafted through the classroom and the teacher had to throw it away. Sara was mortified.

Sara jiggled her leg harder as she remembered her failed experiment. Then she remembered that she was supposed to be listening.

"...the First Law of Thermodynamics is a fundamental..." Sara's leg started jiggling again. *Eek!* She thought, *I have no idea what she's talking about and it's only five minutes into the first class!*

"Imagine you have a cup of hot cocoa." The teacher had Sara's attention now. "And you add more milk and marshmallows to the cocoa." Sara loved hot cocoa with marshmallows. "Now, the cocoa will cool off a little, right? And the milk and the marshmallows will get a little hotter, right?"

Everyone nodded in agreement. "Now, the amount of heat that is lost from the cocoa is equal to the heat gained by the milk and marshmallows. This is the rule."

The teacher took a green boardmarker and wrote on the board: *Energy can change, but it cannot be destroyed.* Speaking as she wrote, she said: “The heat energy just moves from the cocoa to the marshmallows!”

Sara realized that her leg wasn’t jiggling anymore. She never knew that science could include marshmallows. Maybe she could start to enjoy this class after all.

“The fact is that energy does not just disappear. Can anyone think of any other examples?”

The class was silent. “You know, ” the teacher went on, “this idea is true in another way too. Think about all our thoughts, our speech and our actions of the past year. They also don’t disappear just because they’re in the past. Every time you do something, you make an impression on the world. Every time you say something, you make an impression on the world. And every time you even *think* something, you make an impression on the world!”

“Uh, oh,” Sara thought. An image of her potato floated in front of her. Did it still exist somewhere? Would she forever be haunted by her failure? Was it still floating around somewhere? Yikes.

Sara needed to speak up. “But can’t we always repent and make up for the past?”

“That is also true. The ability to change the way we act is a gift, and so powerful that we can even change the past. So I guess the First Law of Thermodynamics has its limits!”

Sara thought about the rotten sweet potato incident. Then she thought about marshmallows. Maybe things could change after all.

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