


**CHABAD**  
  
**RESEARCH UNIT**

שבת..... *for Friday nights* ..... שקדש

Wed. 8 September 2010 - Eve of Rosh Hashana 5771  
 Rosh Hashana and Sedra Ha'azinu

**A NEW FLOW OF LIFE**

**I**S THE UNIVERSE ALIVE? THE SAGES SEE IT AS PULSATING WITH SPIRITUAL energy. The 'pulse' is the rhythm of Divine life-force which continuously recreates everything that exists. The Sages speak of this as a flow of energy emanating from G-d, Who is infinitely beyond the universe. The spiritual energy gives life to everything there is - to the galaxies, the solar system, our planet Earth, every animal or bird, each leaf and every tiny grain of sand - keeping it all in existence.

This Chassidic teaching helps us understand the concept of Rosh Hashanah, the New Year. The life-force is not a constant unchanging flow; it is a pulse. So at Rosh Hashanah, the anniversary of Creation, there is a new burst of life-force coming from G-d to the world. The Sages tell us that each year this flow comes from a higher level of holiness than ever before. In spiritual terms each new year is therefore truly 'New'. There are new possibilities, new unexplored potential<sup>1</sup>.

What is the role of the Jew in this process?

Jewish teaching tells us that existence has a spiritual purpose: to create a dwelling for G-dliness in our world. This means: to make the



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

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details of life express and mirror the holiness of G-d. The Jewish people have been given the responsibility to try to make this happen. The teachings of the Torah guide the Jewish people, and ultimately all humanity to live in such a way that goodness and holiness can be expressed in their lives.

Rosh Hashanah is the time when each Jewish man, woman and child remembers this task. We turn to G-d with deep feeling and rededicate ourselves to Him. We will be His people, and He will be our G-d. In the new world of the New Year, we will try to fulfil our sacred task; at the same time we ask G-d to grant us everything we need in order to do so with joy and happiness.

*May the new flow of life this Rosh Hashanah bring peace, sweetness, light, health and prosperity to the entire Jewish people, in Israel and throughout the world And may the wellbeing of the Jewish nation lead to peace and joy throughout humanity, at last fulfilling the goal of Creation.*

## **HEAVEN AND EARTH**

The Sedra read on Shabbat (11 September) begins with Moses calling to the Heaven and the Earth to listen to his words. It then continues with a long poem in which Moses appeals to the Jewish people to be faithful to the teachings of the Torah. He warns them about what will happen if they forsake G-d's law.

The Sages explain that Moses was calling the Heavens and Earth as witnesses to his declaration. In particular, the Heavens testify as regards the Intention; the Earth testifies as regards the Action. Each Mitzvah (Law) of Judaism is a combination of both.

The effect of these witnesses, comments the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is to encourage the Jewish people in their service of G-d. If you know there are witnesses to your actions you will naturally be more careful! Hence we read this Sedra at this time of year: Heaven and Earth themselves will help us prepare for Yom Kippur<sup>2</sup>.

1. Freely based on Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady's *Tanya* Part 4, ch.14. 2. Freely based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 4, 1157-9.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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## *ROSH HASHANA*

### **SHOFAR**

It was Wednesday morning, the eve of Rosh Hashanah. David and his father were walking home from the synagogue together. David was feeling very serious in preparation for the serious days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. His teacher had explained that during the Hebrew month of Elul we blow the Shofar each weekday, in order to arouse a spirit of repentance in our hearts.

This year, during the month of Elul, David had gone to the synagogue each morning with his father. So today, after a month of hearing the Shofar each morning, he was pretty serious. This showed itself as a kind of frown, which worried his parents.

It suddenly struck David like a bolt of lightning, as they were walking home, that they had not blown the Shofar in the synagogue today. "Oh my," he thought, "they must have forgotten". This was very disturbing to David, and made his frown deepen.

"Just imagine!" he thought. "How could they have forgotten such an important thing as the Shofar on the morning before Rosh Hashanah?" He would have understood if it had happened on another day, but not today. Today was just too serious.

"Daddy" he said worriedly, "I think they forgot to blow the Shofar in the synagogue today!"

“No, David!” replied his father, chuckling. “It wasn't forgotten, we never blow the Shofar on the morning before Rosh Hashanah.”

“But why?” asked David, confused. “I thought we blow the Shofar every weekday to prepare us for Rosh Hashanah, the day we get judged for the New Year. Surely today is the most important day!”

“Well,” said his father, “we don't blow the Shofar the morning before Rosh Hashanah in order to show the difference between a custom and a real law, a Mitzvah! Every weekday in the Hebrew month of Elul we blow the Shofar as a custom. Then on Rosh Hashanah itself we blow as a Mitzvah. So the morning before Rosh Hashanah we do not blow the Shofar at all, in order to show the difference”.

David's frown deepened a little, to the consternation of his father, who could see him out of the corner of his eye as they walked.

“So, tell me Daddy,” he said. “What is the difference between a custom and a Mitzvah? I mean, they are both part of Judaism, aren't they?”

“You are right,” answered his father. “But still there is a difference. The blowing of the Shofar in the days of Elul reminds us that Rosh Hashanah is approaching. But the Mitzvah of blowing the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah itself, actually joins us to G-d. It connects us directly with G-d, and it draws new life-force from G-d into the world, for a good and sweet and happy year!”

“So not blowing it today reminds us that tomorrow on Rosh Hashanah is the real connection,” said David. “Cool!”

David smiled, and his frown disappeared. It would be a good year, he thought, connected with G-d. Connected, through prayers and Mitzvot, and through the blowing of the Shofar.

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