

# IT'S A NICE SOFT SUICIDE...

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

During this month of Elul it's hard to miss the sound of that raspy sounding Shofar. In the past we've discussed, "What's the Shofar saying?" It speaks in Morse code and poetic meter without words. It is a voice, a tone! Now the question is, "What's the answer to the Shofar's call- KOL?"

If it would be a musical concert perhaps applause would be appropriate, but it's not! If it would be a "Brocho"-a blessing then we can all respond with a resounding, "Amen!", but it's not! Discovering the correct response may help us figure out retroactively what the message of the Shofar might be.

It was pointed out to me recently by a colleague and friend, a very insightful observation. When people offer someone a drink, for example, nowadays, it became fashionable to answer, "I'm good!" I catch myself doing the same thing! He pointed out that the all-time correct response is, "No thank you!" That acknowledges that there is a giver in the act of declining the offer! "I'm good" is only about the receiver!

I hear all too often these days, "Whatever" as the answer or response to everything and anything! "Whatever!" That is the ultimate nullification of the value of everything! Nothing matters! "Whatever!" It's open "Letzones" –mocking canonized in daily language. The real answer is "Forever!" not "Whatever!" What is our answer to the Shofar's pleading voice? Is it, "No thank you!" or "I'm good!" or "Whatever!" or "Forever!"?

After the Akeida, we find that Avraham was granted blessings galore, "Because you hearkened to KOLI- My voice!" When HASHEM called he responded, "Hineini- Here I am- I am ready!"

Chaim Salenger pungently and poetically describes the urgency of the Shofar's tone as it reaches out to cure the Jewish soul in the "end of times" when as the Midrash describes, we find ourselves like that ram entangled by our horns in a world of confusion and difficulties!

It's a nice soft suicide  
We are grinning as we go.  
We've been taken for a ride  
But to where we do not know.  
Go and find the human heart  
The human heart's in exile.  
And so we say we're doing fine  
Occupied in our own decline

And there we sit in a frozen mood  
Shattering in pieces,  
Filling up on foreign food  
But funny how the hunger never ceases.  
Through the vanities of time  
And the platitudes of youth  
We are wasted in our prime  
And we can't afford the truth.  
Tangled in the thicket like the horns of  
A wayward ram  
Listen well, and you'll hear that horn a-blowin'  
Calling to the soul of man.

You can build a tower tall.  
You can make yourself the king  
And though the hand of man is small  
He can do most anything  
With every strange success we own  
We say we're unassisted and though  
History moves in a logical flow  
We say that we're exempted  
And when the physical shell gets thicker  
You see the spark inside getting sicker  
So we move around a little quicker  
Employing every diversion that's invented,  
In an artificial light,  
Everything appears the same.  
There's no wrong and there's no right,  
Only thrills to ease the pain  
Tangled in the thicket etc. (Refrain)

Float around on a lavender cloud  
Thinking nothing serious  
When suddenly you're on the ground  
In ways that seem mysterious  
To modify the crooked lines  
To clarify the alibis  
And whereupon you realize  
That the bridge is rather narrow and precarious,  
**It's a nice soft suicide...**