

# EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON OUR TESHUVAH

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

What is the message of the raspy pleading tone of the Shofar? It's not quite music! It does not qualify as poetry! Is it just some grandiose auditory Rorschach test that everyone can read into what they feel? Why then are so many drawn to it like metal to a magnet? What is the message?

There are some specific allusions that breathe meaning into the Kol –the Voice of the Shofar. Rosh HaShana takes place on what our sages tell us is the birthday of humanity. Adam-man was installed with Divinity as the breath of life was blown into his nostrils. Man received his Neshama- his G-dly soul on this day!

When HASHEM said, "Let us make man our image?" with whom was He consulting? Does G-d have partners? Rashi explains that we learn common decency from The Almighty. We consult and included interest and affected parties in the decision making process. The Nefesh HaChaim says that HASHEM was inviting all of the heaven and the earth to contribute and participate and to plug their fate into "man". Rabbi Mendel Weinbach ztl. Had said that G-d was talking with man! He is the partner that completes the incompleteness of him-self and the entire creation by his doing.

It makes sense then, on the day that intersects this important event, that we revisit it as HASHEM measures and judges how well the investment of all investments is fairing. Therefore Rosh HaShana is a sort of cosmic board meeting when the stock holders gather to evaluate how well their company is doing.

The Sefas Emes identifies another reference point. "The Shofar's main purpose is to remind us of Matan Torah- the giving of the Torah". Is this in contradistinction to the first approach? Not at all! Matan Torah was an event that was embedded into the beginning of G-d's creation. Just like the entire physical world was crowned with the formation of man so too humanity remained woefully deficient until it graduated and matured to the reception of the Torah. This was a condition baked into the original building of the world. If the Jewish People would receive the Torah, fine, but if not HASHEM would press the reset button and nullify everything before anything got started. Therefore Matan Torah relates directly to the fresh breath of Divinity within the chest of man. What is it then that the Shofar is telling us?

There are different types of maps of the world. Some focus on topography. Others highlight political lines. Some show concentrations of populations and such. Some maps zero in on various deposits of valuable minerals and resources distributed across the plant. Here is an abundance of gold, and

there is plenty of steel. In this place oil is found and another produces coffee abundantly etc. What is the production, the Gross National Product, of the Jewish People? Kevod Shemaim! Honor for HASHEM!

The Chofetz Chaim once remarked that on a map of the world you'll find the names of big cities like New York, Paris, Tokyo, etc. shown in large print on the map. In heaven G-d has His map of the world and there is Jerusalem, Vilna, Radin, etc. in his day and Bnei Brak, Brooklyn, Queens, Monsey- you name it nowadays. These are the places where The Almighty has His people who are learning and praying, and carrying out His will ever so discretely within the four cubits of Hallacha!

"Rabbi, where are the four cubits of Hallacha?" a fellow asked me recently. "Everywhere we go!" was my answer. "It's not the place that gives importance the person", the Talmud tells us, "It's the person that gives importance to the place!" Those are the four cubits of Hallacha. On Rosh HaShana the Shofar is speaking a coded language that agrees with and resonates within the heart of His loyal servants around the world. A map is being drawn and points of hope are being identified depending upon the response. The purpose of the entire creation and each being is being called into question! Teshuvah not only means "return", but also means "answer". The Shofar asks and everything depends on our Teshuva!