

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha
Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

Sefer Devarim
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בעזרה ש״ת

ראש השנה

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

Declaring His Kingdom

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ROSH HASHANAH: HASHEM IS OUR KING

When we come to Rosh Hashanah, we note what is written in the *sefer Yesod Veshores Ha'avodah: Achai verayai*, he says, “My Brothers, my friends; you know that in the *tefilos* of the *yamim nora'im*, the chief theme is *kavod shamayim*. ותמלך אתה השם לבדך על כל מעשיך – *Hashem should reign alone over all of His works*. That’s our prayer of the day; it’s the crux of our *avodas hayom*. The *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah is *Hashem Melech* – Hashem is King.

Now, the truth is that the Torah does not explain the reason for this important day. About Rosh Hashanah all it says is: יום תרועה יהיה לכם – *It should be a Day of Teruah for you* (Bamidbar 29:1). But what this *teruah* is all about we don’t know – the Torah doesn’t tell us that here. We’ll soon see however that there is a *peirush* on this word *teruah* elsewhere in the Torah. We’ll come back to that soon.

Now, even though it might not be so evident in the words of the Torah what Rosh Hashanah is all about, and what *teruah* is meant to teach us, but when you look in the *sefer ha'tefillah* you see that it’s all *malchiyos*. There are other things too, but even the *zichronos* and *shofros* are connected to the first element, the element of *Hashem Melech*. And so before we even begin, we’ll take the time to explain the word *melech*.

Lashon hakodesh has different ideas about language, about words, than the *umos haolam* have. The nations when they say “King” they mean “the person who acquired power.” Other good qualities, he may have and he may not have. All it means is that he succeeded in his power grab; he’s taken control of a kingdom. But when you look at the word

melech in *lashon hakodesh*, it means more than power, much more than just that.

MELECH AND MILKAH

You all remember that one of the daughters of Tzelofchod was named Milkah. Milkah was an old Hebrew name, from way back. Now it doesn't say Malkah, which would mean Queen or Princess; it says Milkah. What does *milkah* mean? When you turn to *Aramis* (see Daniel 4:24) you see that it means 'counsel,' wisdom. Like we find in the *gemara* many times: *Nimlach* - he thought it over. *Nimlach* is translated as *nisya'eitz*, to take counsel.

So the word *melech* means "the One who has *eitzah*, wisdom." Not merely that He has the *power* to rule the world, but He *knows how* to rule the world. Hashem's wisdom, the *chochmas Hashem*, is the most outstanding form of His *malchus*. הַשֵּׁם בְּחָכְמָה יָסַד אֶרֶץ - *Hashem founded the world with chochma, with wisdom* (Mishlei 3:19). Now, of course He founded it with power, no question about that; the creation of the universe from nothing is powerful, absolutely. But *chochma* is the real explanation of the whole *briyah*. כּוֹנֵן שָׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּיָהּ - *He established the heavens with understanding*. Every detail in the *briyah* is filled with infinite wisdom, and therefore wisdom is the hallmark of Creation, the defining trait of the *briyah*.

And so, when we say '*Hashem Melech*,' it means much much more - infinitely more - than the word "king" as used by the *umos haolam*. Our King is not one who gains power but rather one who *deserves* power because of His ability to rule with wisdom. The Creator is indeed All-Powerful, but His endless wisdom in the management of the world is the reason for His title of *Hashem Melech*, the King of the World.

SO WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?

When you go back to the beginning of the history of our nation, when the *Am Yisroel* stood at the *Yam Suf*, they made a great declaration. They said a number of things, but we're going to listen to the last thing they said. You know, when you write a *shtar* so you have to be *chozer beshitah achronah*, to repeat the contents of the document on the last line. Like they say in America: "What's the bottom line?" And what's the bottom line, *l'havdil*, of the *shiras hayam*? The last thing they said was הַשֵּׁם יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד - *Hashem will reign supreme forever and ever*.

Now, we also say that every morning. Every day in *davening* we say: “Hashem will be King forever and ever.” And we’re happy to say it. Why not? It doesn’t cost us any money. And it could be you read in a *sefer* somewhere that saying *Az Yashir b’simcha* will give you a successful day. Good, very good – you should all have only successful days.

But we have to understand what those words mean. “Hashem should reign forever?” What are we saying it for? He needs us to say that? He needs our *haskamah* like I need a hole in my shoe. Hashem is a *melech* without our saying it. We have to give Him a *mi sh’beirach* that He should be a king forever?! What’s that about?

And it’s not only there; it’s all over. Whatever *tefilos* we say on this great day of Rosh Hashanah – and we say many – we’re always mentioning His *malchus*. מְלִיךְ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם בְּכֹבוֹדָךְ – *Reign over all the world in Your glory*. You hear that? We’re falling on our faces, and we’re begging Him, we’re entreating Him with tears, “Please Hashem, reign over the world.” Doesn’t that sound silly? We have to ask Him to reign over His works?! To our ears it seems superfluous. We don’t have to worry about Him! He’s in charge of the world without our *tefillos*; He needs us to ask Him to be king?!

HASHEM NEEDS OUR SUCCESS

And the answer is Hakodosh Boruch Hu made the world for a purpose – and the purpose is so that Mankind should *recognize* that He reigns over them. And why did He do that? Because He needs men to give Him recognition?! No; Hashem needs nothing from you. Hashem created men in order to bestow upon them the greatest success that they could possibly achieve. And that’s the great achievement of understanding, of knowing implicitly that *Hashem Melech*, that Hashem reigns over the world.

That’s our success in this world – achieving awareness of Hashem as *the Melech*, the only One with true power, wisdom and kindness. And if we would come into this world just to understand that theme; if we’d just get into our thick heads that Hashem is *the King*, then we’ve lived successfully. And then, when our time is up, we would go to eternal happiness as a result of having achieved the purpose of our existence.

And therefore, when we say וְתִמְלֹךְ אִתָּהּ – *And You should reign*, we’re not encouraging Hashem to be king; we’re encouraging ourselves to know that He’s king! We’re asking that Hashem should reign *in the minds of men*, that He should reign in *our* minds. We pray that *we* should recognize that there is one Designer for the universe, and that He has one design that stretches from the beginning of creation to the end of history. That’s called *malchus*. That’s a kingdom. It’s done with a plan, it’s *altz g’cheshbont*. It’s all arranged with a perfect *seder*; and everything was made for this purpose, that mankind should arrive at the understanding that He’s in charge.

STOP LOOKING AROUND... WHAT ABOUT YOU?

And so when we stand in shul tomorrow and we say וְתִמְלֹךְ אִתָּהּ וְהָשֵׁם לְבַדּוֹךָ עַל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ – *Hashem, You should reign alone on all of Your creations*, you yourself are the creation you’re talking about. What we’re actually saying is that we ourselves are most in need of this supplication. We’re asking Hashem to give *us* success in understanding that. It’s not that you’re altruistic, that you’re concerned about the savages in Central America that *they* should see that Hashem is king; you’re a big *tzadik*, standing there all day on Rosh Hashanah, and you’re thinking וְתִמְלֹךְ וְעַל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ... – *You should rule over everyone*, and you’re thinking about the Mexicans and the Scandinavians and the Israelis. No, that’s not what Rosh Hashanah is about.

Now, of course, we wouldn’t begrudge them if they also said *Hashem Melech*. We’d be happy if the Mohammedans and the *Notzrim* and the savages of interior Central America would also be *mamlach Hashem Elokei Yisroel*. And one day they will, no question about it. But you have to be worried most about the interior of *yourself*. What about you?! Charity begins at home. The most important question is, is He in charge of you? That’s number one! That’s your biggest concern, yourself. *You* have to know that Hashem is King. That’s what life in this world is about.

THE SHEVUAH IN SHIRAS HAYAM

And that’s why the *Am Yisroel* made that commitment to Hakodosh Boruch Hu at the Yam Suf: *Hashem yimloch l’olam va’ed*. It was a commitment; a *neder*. It was a *shevuah* they were taking: “We’re proclaiming now that Hashem is our King forever.” Not a king in the sense of a *mashal*, some vague idea, a word in the *siddur* that means

almost nothing at all. “He’s actually our King,” they said, “and from now on we take orders only from Him.” That was the *shevuah*: “We are going to announce always that Hashem Melech, and we’re going to live our lives according to those two words.”

And that’s our job in this world, to continue that commitment that our fathers and mothers made at the Yam Suf; to proclaim Hashem as King over *ourselves* all the days of our lives, and all day long. You want a glass of water? בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. Every time you say a *bracha* you mention that; *melech haolam, melech haolam*; He’s the king of the world. כָּל בְּרָכָה שֶׁאֵין בָּהּ מַלְכוּת אֵינָה בְּרָכָה – “Any *bracha* you say without mentioning the kingship of Hashem is not a *bracha*” (Brachos 12a). It’s not something *derech agav* added in, just something poetic we say – like other nations have kings so we’ll also say we have a king. No, He’s the real thing. Hashem Melech! Hashem is my king! That’s what you have to be getting into your head all the time. Whatever you do, wherever you are, you’re always saying ‘*Melech ha’aolam*’ – we’re always putting that idea into our thoughts, “He’s my king.”

MOHAMMEDANS HAVE THE WRONG ADDRESS

All our lives, we proclaim that Hashem is our *melech*. There’s no nation in the world that does that. Nobody is *mamlich* Hakodosh Boruch Hu anywhere near to what *Am Yisroel* does. And besides, they have different ideas anyhow. They’re talking in the wrong direction altogether. Mohammedans are not talking to the real Hashem. They’re talking to a false *borei*, an imaginary *borei*, who has “chosen” this fellow from the desert – that’s Mohammed – as his *navi*. That’s not Hashem; there’s no such thing. It’s the wrong address *ingantzen*, completely. So when a Mohammedan gets down on his knees and he’s praying with such devotion; “Ahh,” you think, “that’s a *frum goy*.” No; he’s praying in the opposite direction; his back is to Hashem. And when the *Notzrim* pray, they’re praying to I don’t want to say what. A *mamzer*, a *basar v’dam*. All the *umos haolam* are praying to their false gods, and there’s only one nation in the world that is proclaiming *Hashem Melech* – we’re the only ones with the right address! We’re the one nation who live our lives with Hashem!

That’s why it says מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנֵי וְשְׁמוּאֵל בְּקִרְיַי שָׁמוּ – “*Moshe and Aharon were among His kohanim, and Shmuel was among those who called out in His name, קְרָאִים אֶל ה' וְהוּא יַעֲנֵם* – they would call out to Hashem and

He would answer them" (Tehillim 99:7). It's an interesting possuk because we don't understand why these three are mentioned here. Why mention Moshe, Aharon and Shmuel Hanavi together? What's the connection between them?

So we'll explain as follows: You know, when the *Bnei Yisroel* saw *Mitzrayim* chasing behind them, so Moshe Rabeinu said: הַשֵּׁם יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם – *From now on Hashem is going to fight for you.* It's not like we think, merely a figure of speech. No, this is the real truth – He is your King! From now on all of your battles will be waged *by Hashem.* He's your general, your leader, your salvation – He's your everything.

And when the *Bnei Yisroel* sang their song of thanksgiving and said "*Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed,*" they were actually proclaiming Him king. We declare You as our king, as our hope, and You're the one who answers us . That's how it was from the time of Moshe and Aharon when Hashem was proclaimed king; they recognized Hashem as the king, and הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ, they called out to Him, וְהוּא יַעֲנֵנוּ, and He answered them. And that continued through the entire period of the *shoftim*, down to Shmuel Hanavi. Shmuel Hanavi was the end of that period. After that, things changed. After Shmuel, that great era of "And He answered them," came to an end.

Now, what we have to understand is what changed. There were still very great people who came after Shmuel Hanavi. What was it that happened during this great period of our history between the days of *Moshe v'Aharon b'chohanuv*, and *Shmuel b'korei sh'mo*? What changed?

WHO NEEDS A HUMAN KING?

So we'll understand as follows. Up until the time of Shmuel Hanavi the *Bnei Yisroel* didn't even dream of a human king. A human king?! *Hashem Melech!* Hashem is our king! And everybody lived with that truth. If you would ask anyone from the *Bnei Yisroel*, "Who is your king?" so he would say, "What kind of question is that? *Hashem Melech!*" It wasn't just something you said by davening; it was the truth. Everyone understood, "Hashem is our king."

You remember when they came to Gideon – he was a war hero who had saved the *Bnei Yisroel* from their enemies – and they said to him, "We want to make you a leader, a king". So Gideon said "You can't make *me* king – Hashem is your king." Did you ever hear such words?

Now, to us it sounds like just words. It sounds good: “No, Hashem is your king.” It sounds very *frum* to us. But Gideon actually meant it; that’s how people thought in the good old days of our nation. *Hashem Melech!* Hashem is our King!

But many years later, we find that the people asked for a king. In the days of Shmuel Hanavi, at the end of his life, the people came to him and said: עֲתָה שִׁימָה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטָנוּ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם - *We want a king over us now, like the other nations have* (Shmuel I 8:5).

Now, that was already a big change – a big change in attitude. Asking for a king?! Who asks for a king when there’s already a king sitting on the throne?! “Ooooh!” said Hashem. “You’re asking for a *human* king now!”

At that point in our history the *Bnei Yisroel* lost Hashem as their king; He doesn’t show Himself. Of course, Hashem is still there. He’s still the *melech ha’olam*, but now He’s hiding. It’s *hester panim*; He’s behind the scenes. Because if you don’t recognize that He’s the king, if you’re asking for a king, then something is very wrong. Of course, they said, “We know Hashem is our king, but we want also a human king, someone who sits on a throne; someone whom we can see.” But what it really meant was that they *didn’t* know that *Hashem* is *Melech*. They could say the words, just like we can say them, but they didn’t feel it! They felt it much much more than we do, but it was a change. And for the *Am Yisroel*, that was a tragedy. Because that’s the purpose of life – to know that Hashem is our King, and to know it so fundamentally, so clearly, that you don’t even *think* about a human king.

WAIT FOR THE SIXTH DAY

In *Mesichta* Rosh Hashanah the *gemara* tells us the different songs that the *Levi'im* used to sing in the *Beis Hamikdash* on the different days of the week. And it says there that, בְּשֵׁשִׁי הָיוּ אוֹמְרִים הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ גְּאוּת לְבָשׁ - *On the sixth day of the week the Levi'im in the Beis Hamikdash used to sing the kepitel that begins “Hashem reigns and He is clothed in majesty.”* Now why did they choose that for the sixth day? That’s the question the *gemara* asks.

And the *gemara* says עַל שֵׁם שֶׁנִּמְרַם מְלֵאכְתּוֹ, *because on the sixth day Hashem completed His work of creating the universe, וּמֶלֶךְ עֲלֵיהֶן, and He ruled over them.* “Over them” means over all of the things that He created. So

when He created all these things, that was when **הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ גָּאוֹת לְבָשׁ**, that's when He put on His robes of royalty and began His reign. It was only on the sixth day, when man was created and the creation of the universe was completed, that Hashem become King.

Now we know that's not true – absolutely not. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is **הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם וָעֶד**, *He's the king forever*, **אֲבָדוּ גוֹיִם מֵאֶרֶץ**, *even though all the nations would disappear from His world* (Tehillim 10:16), He's still the King. That's because He doesn't need anyone to make Him the King. You know, a human king becomes a ruler if somebody, let's say, one of the chief barons approaches him in the name of all of the nobility, and he bestows upon the king a belt of royalty, a scepter or some other sign of royalty. But if he doesn't have a people that say he's the king, then he's not a king.

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not that type of king. He's *essentially* a *melech*; He's intrinsically a King. And that's actually what our *possuk* says: **הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ**, *Hashem reigned*, **גָּאוֹת לְבָשׁ**, *He is clothed in majesty*. But not the majesty that people put on him; **לְבַשׁ הַשֵּׁם עוֹ** – *Hakodosh Boruch Hu is clothed with a strength*, **הִתְאַזָּר**, *that He girded Himself*. **הִתְאַזָּר** is reflexive. It means 'He girded Himself with strength.' He didn't need anyone else to make Him a king.

So we must understand therefore what the *gemara* means by telling us that when He finished the creation of the universe on the sixth day then **הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ**, *that's when He became the King*. What does that mean?! It's not true – He was always king!

THE BACTERIA IN THIS RUG

From this *gemara* in Rosh Hashanah, we see that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not interested merely in *being* a King; for that He didn't need to create the world. He was the king before He created the world, and He'll be King forever, even if the world would be destroyed. Hakodosh Boruch Hu, however, is very much interested in *being king over us*. How much is He interested? It's impossible for us to express how greatly interested He is that there should be someone to see, to realize, to recognize that He is a king.

Now don't make a mistake. That's not because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is interested in the applause, in the acclaim of humanity. As mentioned a number of times here, all of humanity to Hakodosh Boruch

Hu is no more than all the bacteria in this rug right here. If all the millions of bacteria in this rug would all applaud one of us sitting here, that man wouldn't be tickled at all. It wouldn't mean a thing to him. And that's as much as Hashem needs the acclaim of humanity. So why does Hakodosh Boruch Hu seek to have mankind recognize His kingship?

IS HASHEM GOOD OR SELFISH?

We'll explain this by means of an important principle that we've said here before. We say in our *tefilah* לְשֵׁמוֹ כְבוֹד יְצַר טוֹב יְצַר, *the Good One created all this glory for His name*. Hashem is called the Good One, and it says here that He created all of this glory for His name. All of the kindness we see in this world, the Good One created for His name - to glorify Himself.

The question is: if He created everything for the glory of His name, so it's no sign at all that He's a good one. When a man does things for somebody else's benefit but not to be recognized, that's when you can say he's a good one. But when someone performs deeds of kindness, but his motive is to be recognized, so how could you call him "The Good One"? And yet, that's why it says there: טוֹב יְצַר, the Good One - that's Hashem - created everything, לְשֵׁמוֹ כְבוֹד, for the purpose of bringing glory to His name. It's a contradiction. If He did this because He is good, if He made this universe because He is kind and benevolent, then He didn't do it to glorify His name. But it says there that the purpose *is* for His glory! So why do we call Him 'The Good One'?

The answer is that there is no paradox; both principles are true. And that's because the greatest good which can be bestowed on anybody, the greatest benevolence which can be bestowed on any man, is if you make him Aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. That's the greatest perfection of a man. The more he is aware, the more he feels he's standing in the presence of the King, the more perfection that man has acquired and the greater he is. There's nothing higher in life. רֵאשִׁית חֵכְמָה יְהִיאַת הַשָּׁמַיִם - *The greatest and the highest of wisdom, is for a man to feel the presence of Hashem.*

There's no question that the Good One is bestowing good things upon us. He certainly is bestowing millions of benefits on mankind because in the world there are all kinds of happiness, all kinds of good things we're enjoying. But all of them have one common purpose - כְבוֹד

לְשִׂמּוֹ, to bring us to recognize the Creator; and that is the highest good of all.

And that's what it means when it says that Hakodosh Boruch Hu completed all of creation on the sixth day, וּמַלְךְ עָלֵיהֶן, and that's when He ruled over them. Because the kingship of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is demonstrated by means of what is seen in the world. Of course he was always King, but the purpose of the creation of the world, or everything in the world, is to announce to Mankind that there is a Creator.

Now, let's get that into our heads. The fundamental purpose of all the things in the world is to demonstrate that Somebody made them. That's important because it's the foundation of understanding all of reality. Whatever you see in this world has the purpose of making you aware of the Creator. All day long, wherever you turn, whatever you see, you should be seeing and saying *Hashem Melech*.

CARS ARE BICYCLES FOR GROWNUPS

Only that it's not as simple as it sounds. It's difficult sometimes to recognize Hashem in this world because there are so many things that distract us. גַּם אֶת הָעֵלָם נָתַן בְּלִבָּם, *Hashem put the love of the world into men's hearts*, מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִמְצֵא הָאָדָם אֶת הַמְעֶשֶׂה, *so that people shouldn't discover the work of creation*, אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים מֵרֵאשִׁית וְעַד סוֹף, *that He made from beginning to end* (Koheles 3:11). It's all His, but it takes some effort to see Him.

Hashem didn't want us to see that He's everything in this world. That's too easy; it wouldn't be a test for us. So He puts into this world bicycles for children. He puts automobiles for grownups. He puts good times and He puts food. He puts marriage and children and money. All the things, some of them *mitzvos*, some not, whatever it is, people are busy all the time. *Parnasah*, ambition, making a living, entertainment, this and that, streets and cities and newspapers and neighbors and bungalows. Everything in the world is working *in order* that people should get their minds off Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Now I'll explain that a little more, a little more deeply. You remember when Hashem created the world, He said *yehi ohr*, "Let there be light." And there was light. וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר - *And as the earth revolved, there was night and day*. The earth turned towards the light and away from the light, and that's how there was day and night. Now where did

that light come from? Did it come from the sun? No; there was no sun yet. So where did it come from? It had to be coming from somewhere if the earth's revolution was causing day and night. So what was the source of this light?

And the answer is that it came *mei'ayin*, it came from nothing. It came from Hashem, *yesh mei'ayin*. Light is energy, you know. It came from Hashem's energy. *Alef lamed, Keil*, means energy. Hashem said, "Let light start pouring out to this world," and light poured forth. It was light emanating, streaming forth from a certain point, but without a source; there was no sun yet!

Now, had we been around at that time, we would have been impressed by that great lesson. Where does light come from? Light comes from Hashem! If we could have been there at that time before the sun existed, we would have become aware of Hashem like nobody's business. "Look, the light comes directly from Hashem. There's nothing else except Hashem. He's the power of the world. *Alef lamed*, He is the *keil*; He is energy. He is the source of all energy." That would have been a tremendous achievement of awareness that Hashem Melech; that would have been a Rosh Hashanah to remember.

THE SUN DARKENS THE WORLD

And then what happened? Four days later Hashem created the sun and brought darkness to the world. Now the sun seems to us a great gift because it illuminates the world. Every day the sun pours forth millions of tons of horsepower, of energy in the form of light, onto this earth - that's what keeps the world functioning. We can only see because of the sun; we live because of the sun.

But the truth is *the sun darkens the world*. The sun constantly conceals the truth because now you look at the sun, and you think *the sun* is the one that gives us the light. And that's the great deception, the great *sheker*, of the sun. The sun has no light. It's only Hakodosh Boruch Hu using the sun as a lantern. It's still His energy, only that now, instead of seeing energy coming from space without any cause except Hashem Himself, we're deceived into thinking it comes from the sun.

And what happens as a result? As a result, millions of people worshipped the sun instead of worshipping Hashem. And even we, *lehaodil*, we don't worship the sun, but when we see the sun, *we think it's*

the sun that produces the light. We know that the sun has thermonuclear processes. We know all about it. It's like an atom bomb exploding constantly, a hydrogen bomb exploding over and over again producing energy that comes down here in the form of light energy. We know all about it! We *think* we know, but it's all a deception. It's only an excuse not to see the truth. The real truth was before the sun.

"HAVE MERCY" SEEMS OUT OF PLACE

And that's why when we say the *bracha* of *yotzer ohr* in the morning, so we're in the middle of praising Hashem for creating the luminaries, *מָה רַבּוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ הַיָּם*, and right there, in the middle of praising, we interrupt with something that seems out of place. We're talking about the great creation of the luminaries, we're thanking Him for creating the sun, and then all of a sudden we're asking Him to have pity on us. *אֱלֹהֵינוּ רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ* - "Hashem the eternal One, with Your abundant compassion, have compassion upon us." It's a puzzle. While we're thanking for the sun and the moon and for the light we say *אֱלֹהֵינוּ רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ*, have pity on us? It's a big *kasha*.

It's something that bothered me for years. If we were saying *tefillos* where we're asking for our benefit, all right, so *אֱלֹהֵינוּ רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ* fits in. But this is a *hoda'ah*. We're thanking Hashem for the *me'oros*. When you're praising Hashem for giving us luminaries, that's no place, smack in the middle, to ask for *rachmanus*, for pity! It's a non-sequitur; it doesn't belong.

So we'll say the *peirush* is like this: *אֱלֹהֵינוּ רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ* - "Hakodosh Boruch Hu, we're recognizing the greatness of the sun; we're appreciating the light of the sun. Ah! What a beautiful sun it is. *וַיִּמְתַּק וַיִּמְתַּק וַיִּמְתַּק* - How sweet is the light, *וְטוֹב לְעֵינַיִם לְרִאֲאוֹת אֶת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ*, how good it is for the eyes to see the sun. Ah, a pleasure to have a sun that gives us light and warmth." But at the same time, while we're saying these words, we remember that there's still a great *sakanah* there. Because when we look at the sun, it's so easy to forget that we're seeing nothing except for Hashem - it's easy to think that it's the sun that is giving us light.

And therefore we say to Hashem, *אֱלֹהֵינוּ רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ* - "We're looking at nature and we're thanking you for the sun that gives us light that allows us to see everything. But please help us, Hashem, that we shouldn't be deceived. We shouldn't think that it's nature, it's the sun that's giving us light. No, it's all You. *You* created the sun."

THE SUN TRICKS US

We say it with our mouths during *davening*, but then we go outside and the sun is shining away, warming us all by itself. Oh no! That's a terrible thing to think. That's the greatest contradiction to *Hashem Melech*. The sun has no power to do anything by itself. The light of the sun is nothing at all. **בִּי הוּא לְבָדוֹ**, *He Himself* does all these things. There's no nature, no sun. All the wonderful things we see, it's only a reminder that *Hashem Melech*.

As miraculous as all these things seem to be; it seems to be so perfectly constructed that the elements in nature can give you life, and give you all the things you need; but it's a *nisayon*, it's a darkness and a deception. It's only You, Hashem, **בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ**, You should have pity on us. You should help us.

We live in a world with such great manifestations of Hashem's presence, the sun, the moon – all of nature is opportunities to recognize Him and His great kindness, but we walk through life like we're asleep, like dumbbells. And we don't want to be dumbbells, so we say **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, **בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ**, "Have pity on us." We're asking that we should understand that it's *You* who gives light. "Please Hashem; we don't want to waste our lives. We beg of You Hashem, have pity on us that we should not make the mistake of thinking it's the sun. The sun doesn't help us at all. *You* are warming us. *You* are giving us light. Help us because we're being deceived into thinking that you're not the *melech*."

HE WHO DWELLS IN SECRET

And therefore, it's so important to be able to look through the world and not be deceived by it. **יֵשֵׁב בְּסֵתֶר עֲלֵינוּ**, the Most High, He dwells in secret. Hashem is operating in secret; everything seems to be working on its own. **אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת**, Hashem created things *that they should continue to do on their own*. From now on it seems like the world is running on it's own. The sun comes up, it goes down, it comes up. The rain cycle – the water evaporates from the ocean, the winds blow the clouds over land, it rains, the water runs back into the oceans, and the cycle starts again. It's *la'asos*; the world runs on its own!

Nothing doing! It's only a dream. It's imagination. Hashem is doing everything! *Hashem Melech*! And don't think Hashem stopped, that He gave it over to nature, and He retired from the field. He's there all the

time! Only that instead of seeing Him openly, you're being deceived by nature.

And our job is to open our eyes. The *malachim* - their eyes are open right now and they say כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ - "The world is filled with His glory," because they see right now the truth. But we don't. We're deceived by nature, and therefore we say וְיִמְלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ, the time should come when His glory will fill the world, and then everybody will see that You're the One who is in the world. Nothing else. אֵין עוֹד מִלְכָּדוֹ. There's nothing else except Hashem. *Hashem Melech* and nothing else is anything.

ROSH HASHANAH IS THE RECHARGING STATION

And now we come back to Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is the opportunity to review and to renew in our minds this important principle. So every time you say 'Hashem Melech,' you're not merely repeating a *pizmon* from the *machzor*. You're saying the *yesod hayesodos*. Every 'Hashem Melech' is a new opportunity to implant in your mind the conviction that Hakodosh Boruch Hu, Hashem, *yud kay vav kay*, He is the Wisdom of the world, He is the Kindliness of the world, and the entire world is nothing but the word that came out of His mouth. בְּדָבָר הַשָּׁמַיִם נִעֲשֶׂה. There's no world. The world is nothing but the *dvar Hashem*. That's why *yud kay vav kay* is used. He's the One who said *yehi*, it should be, and the world came out of nothing. The entire world is nothing but the word of Hashem, and therefore on Rosh Hashanah all we speak about is the most important fact in the world, the *yesod ha'yesodos*, that Hashem is *the King*, and that there is no other force, no other power beside for Him.

And now we can understand the answer to a big question that has bothered many people. Why is it that Yom Kippur comes *after* Rosh Hashanah? Rosh Hashanah is a *Yom Hadin*, we're being judged. It's a great *sakanah*, Rosh Hashanah. It's a time when Hakodosh Boruch Hu inscribes us *l'chaim* or whatever else there is. Some are *nichtav v'nechtam*, their fate is sealed on this day. And we're not ready to be judged; it's frightening because we are going to be judged according to what we are, and we didn't make enough *teshuva* yet.

WHERE'S THE TESHUVA ON ROSH HASHANAH?

So wouldn't it be worthwhile if instead of talking about *malchus Hashem* all day Rosh Hashanah, we would spend the day saying "Forgive us for this sin, and for that sin, and for this sin." At least you're taking one sin off the scale! And as the side of *chovos* becomes lighter, the side of *zechuyos* becomes greater. You could save your life on Rosh Hashanah by means of *al cheit!* So how could we waste time on Rosh Hashanah on talking about *malchus Hashem*, saying *Hashem Melech, Hashem Melech* all day long, when we're in the greatest danger?

If on Rosh Hashanah, *chas v'shalom*, the *chovah* side, the side of accusation is heavier, then you won't get a second chance. So we should spend time on Rosh Hashanah saying **עַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֵנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ**. That seems to us the most sensible way. In a time of danger, you have to throw overboard all the ballasts so the ship shouldn't sink. We have to throw overboard whatever sins we can and save ourselves.

Or at least we should have Yom Kippur *before* Rosh Hashanah. We would say *viduy* and do *teshuvah* all day long, and have the *aseres yemei teshuvah*, and then, when Rosh Hashanah finally comes, we're already cleansed of all our sins. That's how it should be - Yom Kippur should come earlier than Rosh Hashanah! But no, we postpone *teshuvah* until later, until after *Yom Ha'Din*. And instead of saying **עַל חַטָּא** on Rosh Hashanah, we're busy saying **וְתִמְלֹךְ אֱתָהּ הַשֵּׁם לְבִדְךָ**. We're praying that You, Hashem, become our King. It's a big *kasha*.

THE BIGGEST AVEIRAH!

And the answer is that proclaiming Hashem as King is the biggest *teshuva* you can make! On Rosh Hashanah you have to do *teshuva!* And what's the greatest *teshuva*? We don't say **עַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֵנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ** on Rosh Hashanah. We don't enumerate this *cheit* and that *cheit*, because there's one big *cheit!* There's one overall failure of mankind that must be rectified on Rosh Hashanah before anything else; and that's the failure to recognize that *Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed*. And that means that saying *Hashem Melech* is the most important form of *teshuva* and that's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu will consider most when He thinks about our fate for the year to come.

The biggest *teshuva* is the knowledge that there's nothing in the world. It's all a deception. Money, cars, houses, even children, everything in this world is a deception. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the only

entity that exists in the world, and therefore on this day we remind ourselves, we engrave into our minds that He is everything, that Hashem Melech.

And that is the greatest *zechus* we can accomplish on Rosh Hashanah; to become aware that He's our King. That's the most necessary, the most essential form of repentance, and that's why we forgo all other forms of atonement and asking for forgiveness, and we concentrate only on this alone.

BLOWING SHOFAR MAKES HASHEM GREAT

Now, when we blow the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah, the *shofar* is saying עורו ישנים, *wake up you sleepers*. Wake up for what? Now we could say wake up and remember this, wake up and think about that - we could have said that. But what we're saying now is that fundamentally what the *shofar* is really saying is, "Wake up and think about Hashem Melech." Wake up and think what we spoke about here tonight. That's why we blow the *shofar*. עלה אלקים בתרועה, "*Hashem ascends in the sound of the trumpet*." He ascends? How does He ascend? We make Him greater?! A little man on this earth takes a ram, and he saws off its horn and stands below in a little shul, and he gives a blow, tooo-tooo-tooo, and Hashem becomes elevated thereby?! The Creator of the universe who created billions of star worlds, in which this earth is a speck of dust, and because one human being or a thousand or even a million human beings blow on the *shofar* so He's exalted now?!

If you remember, I said in the beginning of the lecture that we would find a fundamental *peirush* on why Rosh Hashanah is called *Yom Teruah*, by looking somewhere else in the Torah. Now I know the *meforshim* say many *kavanos* for *teki'as shofar*, and in the *machzor* I'm sure you'll find a number of explanations for why we blow *shofar*, but it's actually our old friend Bilam who came and explained the *possuk* of יום התרועה יהיה לכם - "It should be a day of blowing for you."

When Bilam spoke *b'nevuah* about the *Am Yisroel*, he said: ותרועת בו מלך בו - "And a shouting, a blowing, for the king is among them" (Bamidbar 23:21). What is our *teruah*? It's a *teruas melech*, a shouting for our king.

So what is meant when we say עלה אלקים בתרועה? The answer is that Hashem is exalted *in our minds* by means of our announcing His

kingship. He is elevated in the minds of Mankind when they announce His sovereignty by blowing the *shofar*. That was the practice in the olden days; when a king began his reign it was announced by the blowing of trumpets. And on Rosh Hashanah, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is announced as the *Melech* – that’s the purpose of the *shofar*; to remind ourselves that Hashem is the King.

WAKE UP YOU SLEEPY HEADS

And so the *shofar* comes along on Rosh Hashanah and blows: Tooooo- toooo -toooooo! Wake up you sleepers. Wake up, it’s Rosh Hashanah. What should we wake up about? *Al cheit*? No! There’s no long list of *al cheits*. Today we’re worried about the big *cheit*! Not this little *cheit* or that little *cheit*; you’ll worry about that later; there’ll be time for that during the *aseres yimei teshuva* and Yom Kippur. All of our little *chata’im* are minor things. They are all *toldos*. They’re all results of the one big *cheit*. And today we’re dealing with the big one; and that’s forgetting Hakodosh Boruch Hu, forgetting that He’s the King.

And so, all day long we stand on our feet and shout הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ הַשֵּׁם יְמִלְךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. He’ll forever be the King – no matter how many things are in the world that might make you forget about Him. And therefore the more a person gets into his blood the spirit of הַשֵּׁם יְמִלְךָ, the more he deserves to live. That’s the *sod* of life on Rosh Hashanah. The secret of another year of life is to get Hashem Melech into your blood. Because Hashem wishes us to continue this career of proclaiming His Kingship. That’s what life is for.

Rosh Hashanah comes to recharge the batteries and to give us the awareness that we need for all year long. And that’s why we should labor all day long thinking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu as the מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. So as you stand in *shul* on Rosh Hashanah and the *ba’al tokeia* is blowing, think, “Number one is Hashem Melech. We’re announcing the reign of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.” That’s what has to get into our heads.

Now isn’t it a pity? A lot of people come on Rosh Hashanah to the synagogue and never once think of this principle which Rosh Hashanah represents. A thousand other things you’ll think about, but not the *ikar*. And it’s such an important principle, it’s so essential that we think about it because a man’s judgment on Rosh Hashanah depends on his realization of this principle.

SHOFAR BLOW IS A CRY FOR HELP

Now it says in the Torah וְכִי תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאֶרֶץְכֶם, when there comes a war in your land and you have to fight against the invaders, so you should blow *shofar* and Hashem will hear. Then it also says וּבְיוֹם וּשְׂמֵחַתְכֶם וּבְמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם, on the days when you come together to rejoice you'll also blow *shofar*. What is this shofar that it has two different purposes, one for crying out for help and one for rejoicing?

We're saying two things here and both are one. We call out to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for help all day long; we say *refaeinu Hashem*, please Hashem save us. Heal us from our illnesses. *Barech aleinu*, help us have *parnasah* so we should have something to eat. We're crying out to Hashem all day long because by crying out to Him we are declaring Him our *Melech*. The *shofar* that you use in a time of *tzarah*, *chalilah*, to cry out for help, that *shofar* means we don't go to anyone else. Even though we have an army, even though we have weapons; no, it's nothing. It's only You, Hashem; You are the One who leads us into battle. When we cry out with a *shofar* against our enemies, we are declaring that we have no outlook for any kind of help except from You alone, אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֵי אֲתָהּ.

And that's why when the Jews were in the concentration camps, when some were going to their deaths, the good ones didn't forget. The ones who forgot that Hashem is *melech*, the ones who were not *frum* before or who were not *frum* enough, they saw Nazis, they saw fires, they saw a concentration camp, they saw tortures, but they didn't see Hashem. But the *frummeh*, the good ones always said, 'Hashem Melech.' "All this is bluff," they said. "It doesn't cause us for a moment to forget the truth." And the truth is Hashem is in control of everything. And out of this darkness comes our success when even in the midst of all this darkness we recognize the truth of Hashem.

SHOFAR BLOW IS CRY OF HAPPINESS

Now suppose we're successful in our lives. You took in your crops. You harvested your field. You have wine. You have oil. You have plenty of *tevuah*. You're happy. So now you come together on *yomtiv* to celebrate; *chag ha'asif*, *chag habikurim*. You have to blow the shofar. בְּיוֹם וּשְׂמֵחַתְכֶם וּבְמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם - On the *yomim tovim* we blow the shofar. Why blow then? Same thing. To show that it comes from You. *It comes from You!* We blow the *shofar* to say "You're the king!"

Here you have a farmer who worked all summer. He plowed the field. He planted. He worked really hard. He harvested. He threshed the grain. He winnowed it. He ground it. And now after it's all over, he has in front of him a piece of bread on the table. What does he say? He says בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ. You're the One who did it. I didn't do anything. All our labor is nothing. It's all you. So בְּיוֹם שִׁמְחָתְכֶם, when you blow shofar and say "Hashem Melech," you're announcing that all of your happiness, all of your success comes only from Hashem. All that is included in *teruas melech*, announcing Hashem as king.

And even when a man goes to his wedding – Ah! It's a *sason vesimchah*, he's drunk with happiness. Everybody's dancing and singing. The orchestra is playing. It's all nothing. הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ. Don't forget Hashem for one moment. He is right there next to you, between you and the *kallah*. He's there! Don't forget about Him. Nothing in the world should make you forget Hashem.

CHUMASH IS A SHULCHAN ARUCH

So that's what Bilam said. וַתִּרְוַעַת מֶלֶךְ, it's a nation that is always talking about Hashem, their king. They're always shouting for Him! You understand that *frum* Jews live by the *Shulchan Aruch*. But you have to know that the higher *Shulchan Aruch* is written in the *chumash*; the *Shulchan Aruch* is only a *peirush* on the *chumash*. So the first of all of our obligations is to think about what it says in the *chumash*. *Bereishis bara Elokim. Tru'as melech bo*. That's number one.

Now, that's so important that it cannot be overemphasized. People fall into the habit of forgetting. They're thinking about this *halachah*, this *sugya*. They're thinking only about the details and after a while they forget that Hashem Melech.

THE #1 REQUIREMENT

We have to understand that. It's really good to be *frum*. Wear your *tzitzis* out. Beautiful. Wear black hats. Excellent. Wear *payos*. Be *mekayem mitzvos*. Very good, very good! But you have to know that the number one requirement of a *yehudi* is that he's thinking about Hashem. You should try it once in a while. Once in a while think about Hashem. Little by little you might think a little more about Him. Get in the habit of keeping your mind as much as possible on Hashem. You start with a

minute or two. You have to exercise your thinking muscles with one minute or two minutes. It's not easy but that's the most important endeavor that we are expected to achieve in this life.

That's the first *Shulchan Aruch* of all; and Bilam said that this is the power of the *Am Yisroel*. הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ עִמּוֹ - "Hashem their G-d is with them." Do you know why? Because וַתְּרוּעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ, it's only because they are "always proclaiming Him King."

NOW THAT'S A BRACHA!

We read in the story of Dovid Hamelech that a certain wise woman once said to him that he should be בְּצִרוּר הַחַיִּים אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ - *You should be in the bind of life together with Hashem*. What does that mean "bound with Hashem?" It has two meanings. One is when a person is bonded to Hashem in his thoughts. He thinks about Hashem all his life, during his day, in the streets, when he's at work, in the *yeshivah* where he's learning, at home. When he gets up and when he goes to sleep he's thinking about Hashem. And the more he does it the more he's bonded in the bundle together with Hashem. Hashem is going to continue and he'll continue with Him.

That's how she gave him a *brachah*. With *Hashem Elokecha*, your *nefesh*, your soul, your life, should be bound up. And because you're loyal and devoted to Hashem, Hashem wants you to continue. He'll protect you again and again.

And so, when people look forward to the ensuing year and they are thinking, "What program, what resolution, should I adopt that would cause me to find favor in the eyes of Hashem and make me deserving of another chance?" this is what they should think about first. Every year we ask for another chance and now we understand that if we look forward to a career of *deveikus*, of thinking about Hashem, of keeping Hashem in our minds as much as possible, then we have a certain bargaining card with Hashem. We could tell Him, "Please Hakodosh Boruch Hu; we are going to be *avodim* who recognize Your *malchus*." We're going to declare *Hashem Melech* throughout the year - not merely by saying the words, but by living in consonance with the principle that Hashem is everything. And then we'll be living for a purpose. That's a life worth living.

TIED UP IN THE NEXT WORLD

There's another meaning of *tzror hachaim*, however. A much more important meaning. Nobody lives forever, and in the World to Come this blessing is of utmost importance. The *gemara* says **הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא** **אֵין בּוֹ לֹא אֹכֵלָה וְלֹא שְׁתֵּיהֶן**, there's no eating or drinking. What is the happiness, the great ecstasy that Hashem promises to those who are loyal to Him? So it says there, **צְדִיקִים יוֹשְׁבֵינָה וְעֹטְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרָאשֵׁיהֶם**, they will sit in the Next World with crowns on their heads. The Rambam says the crowns are the *da'as*, the Awareness of Hashem that they gained in this world. You hear that? You'll have a crown on your head. That's the *da'as* that you gained by thinking about Hashem in this world. **וְנִהְנֵינִי מִזֵּיו** **הַשְּׁכִינָה**, you will enjoy the splendor of the *shechinah*.

So to be together with Hashem and to enjoy the ecstasy of that closeness, that's a happiness that's forever and ever. There's no greater happiness; even Hashem Himself cannot make a greater happiness because Hashem cannot make anything greater than He is. And therefore that was part of her blessing, that you should be **צְרוּרָה בְּצִרוֹר** **הַחַיִּים אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ** **עַד עַד**, together with Hashem forever in the World to Come.

So Rosh Hashanah is not only for the coming year. Many times Rosh Hashanah is a day that has ramifications for one's whole life. But not only this life. It has to do with the Next World too. And so when you blow *shofar* and you're thinking **בּוֹ יִתְרוֹעַת מְלֶכְךָ**, it's a proclamation that Hashem is our *Melech*. All our hopes are on Him; all our loyalty is to Him. And if you say that, then Hashem says "If so, then you're going to be with Me forever and ever. **אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם לֹא שָׁנִיתִי**, I Hashem, I never changed, **וְאַתָּם בְּגִי יַעֲקֹב לֹא כָלִיתֶם**, and you too will never come to an end. You make Me your king in this world and I'll be with you forever, in this world and in the World to Come."

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתְּבוּ וְתִתְחַמּוּ

שאל אביך ויגדך זקינך ויאמרו לך

Q&A

With
Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l



Q:

The Rav said tonight that we should get busy before Rosh Hashanah remembering all the good that Hashem has given us since last Rosh Hashanah. But don't we have to spend the time we have left thinking about our sins and our behavior over the past year and making resolutions for improving this coming year?

A:

You'll recall that I said the words, "as part of our work." Really, there's so much work to be done, that we don't have time in the ensuing period, until tomorrow at sunset, to do what has to be done. But remembering all the good that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us this past year, and thanking Him for it, is most surely a very important part of our preparation.

So instead of worrying about fitting it all in, I'll tell you what to do. You make sure to think for five minutes about the past year – about all the good that Hashem has given you since exactly one year ago. Do that and you'll be a great man. And then another five minutes about resolutions for the coming year. And then you'll be an even greater person. Those ten minutes will be a great accomplishment.

If after sitting here for an hour and a half, you'll go out and think for five minutes, you should know that you're an exception. You're a dagul mei'rivavah – you're one out of ten thousand. There's nobody like you.

Who thinks for five whole minutes about gratitude for Hashem for the past year?! And who thinks for five minutes about making resolutions for improving himself in the coming year?! People talk about it. But that's all. That's why I said in the beginning of our talk, that if you do this on a small scale, then you shoot up and your head is way above everybody else.

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