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The Jewish King

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פרשת שופטים

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Jewish King

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Part I. Without a King

The Conditional Mitzvah

In Parshas Shoftim we read about the mitzvah of מִלֶּךְ עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ - שׁוֹם תִּשֶׂים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ - You should place a king over you (Shoftim 17:15). Now, it's interesting to note that this mitzvah seems to be different from all other mitzvos. Because it doesn't just say, "You should place a king over you;" instead it comes with an introduction.

The parshas hamelech starts like this: וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲשֵׁימָה עָלֵי מֶלֶךְ - If you, the Am Yisroel, will say, "Let us put a king over ourselves," שׁוֹם תִּשֶׂים - then you should appoint one for yourself. It's a condition for the mitzvah - first you have to ask for it; but if you wouldn't say anything, there's no mitzvah.

And the truth is that many years passed before the Am Yisroel asked. For hundreds of years the Am Yisroel had no king - בְּיָמֵם הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ - בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל (Shoftim 17:6). All around them, all the nations and even the smallest cities and towns had kings. Melech Sedom, Melech Amora, Melech

Yericho – a long list of kings (Yehoshua 12: 9-24). Everybody had kings; but the Am Yisroel? Nothing.

Don't Defund The Police

Now, there are some writers, smart alecks, who say the Jewish people were a backward nation; some loose desert tribes who gathered in a confederation of sorts, but weren't advanced enough to develop the concept of a monarchy until much later. They read the *possuk*, "*And these are the kings who reigned in Edom before a king ever reigned over the Bnei Yisroel*" (Bereishis 36:31), and they thought it means that Edom was more enlightened than the Jewish nation.

You know what the Torah is really saying? It's telling us that in Edom they *needed* a king! Otherwise, they would cut each other's throats. They needed a king, an authoritarian and strongman, to enforce law and order. Are you just going to let the *Edomites* run around and do whatever they want?! What do you think they're going to do? You think they're going to build *yeshivos*?! They'll learn *Mesillas Yesharim*?! I don't have to tell you what's going to be.

Monarchy Rules

I'm going to shock you now but monarchy is the best form of government. Of course, sometimes you'll have a wicked person who becomes king – you can have a wicked President too – but no nation can exist without a strong authority. And that's what a king is. You don't know from it because we don't have such a thing anymore, but a king means there's a real boss, someone who is guiding the affairs of the nation. And he's the ultimate authority; he's the final word on anything and everything.

It's not like today when the President has to take into account this constituency or that constituency. What are the Puerto Ricans going to say? What are the blacks or the Italians going to think? And then there's a Congress and a Supreme Court; there's the military too, the generals who have the President's ear. The President is not the final word – he's being pulled in all directions. He has very little authority because every Tom, Dick and Harry has an opinion; and that's why America is going *meshugeh* today.

Now, I'm not going to argue with you about it because you think you know more; your minds have already accepted the ideals of democracy. But I'm telling you; I studied the subject and there's no doubt that democracy is a failure and it's leading to disaster. Of course, we appreciate the freedom from persecution and the rights to worship – we are grateful

to America – but there’s no question that too much freedom is a failure for society.

We Always Had a King

In the good old days when the king was everything, he was the source of all authority, it kept everyone in check. The king guided the affairs of the nation – everything was in his hands; the executive branch, the judicial branch, the legislative branch. All three branches of government belonged to him.

But among the *Bnei Yisroel* it wasn’t needed! We didn’t appoint a king of flesh and blood because Hakodosh Boruch Hu was all of that and much more. He was *the* authority and all royalty belonged to Him!

You’ll remember, at the very beginning of our history, when we left Mitzrayim, our forefathers were saved at the *Yam Suf* and they all shouted **וְעַרְוּ יְמִלְךָ לְעַלְמָא וְהָיָה**! It wasn’t just a pious expression like we say today. Hakodosh Boruch Hu was the real *melech*; He was the government and His Torah was the constitution. He was one who sat on the throne guiding the national fortune of the *Am Yisroel* as well as the life of every individual.

A Ridiculous Idea

And therefore the *Am Yisroel* never even *thought* about appointing a king over them. A king of flesh and blood wearing a golden crown? Sitting on a physical throne in a palace? It was ridiculous! And he would be surrounded by servants and soldiers; all the panoply of royalty! Such a thing was absurd to them.

That’s why among the *Am Yisroel* nobody ever entertained ambitions of becoming a *melech*. And if someone was caught contemplating such an idea, that was the worst. Not because people were envious. Not because they begrudged him glory. It was because he was a usurper! He was taking away the throne of the sole *Melech Yisroel*! No one had the audacity to think of making a coup and seizing power. You’ll take away power from Hakodosh Boruch Hu?!

King of All and Nothing

Now, it’s hard for us to imagine such an objection. “We’re not taking away power from Hashem,” we say. “*Chas v’shalom!* We just want a king!” That’s because after all these centuries of being accustomed to sublimating the idea of *Hashem Melech* and using it only in allegorical form, it’s hard for us to understand that there was once a time when our forefathers actually visualized, they actually felt, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu was sitting on a throne and managing the affairs of the *Am Yisroel*.

Today the pious Jew will tell you, “Certainly Hashem is *melech*! What’s the question!” But actually it’s a very big question for him. Because he’s thinking maybe about tremendous galaxies; about heavenly bodies without end. *Melo kol ha’aretz kevodo* – His glory fills all of space. It’s a wrench of the intellect to pull Hakodosh Boruch Hu out of space and seat Him on a throne in our midst and make him *Melech* in the most tangible sense of the word.

Royalty and Nobility

Now, I use the word *melech* deliberately because the English word “king” doesn’t do any justice at all to the *lashon kodesh* word *melech*. We don’t appreciate the word *melech* anymore because the gentiles have corrupted the concept altogether. By them, one didn’t become king because he knew how to manage the affairs of the state better than his fellows. Who usually became king after all? It was somebody who was a tough brute, a *shikur* who gained the throne by assassinating someone before him.

We think, the royal family in England! Ahh, the royal family; such glory, such honor. I’ll tell you how it started way back. Way back there was a brigand in the highlands of Scotland who was more vicious than his fellow cousins, and so he gained control of his clan. And after committing many deeds of mayhem, he finally succeeded in building himself a castle, and making himself a member of the Scottish nobility.

After a while he was so rich that his family intermarried with the reigning family in England. The drunkards of Scotland were *meshadeich* with the drunkards of England; *invei hagefen b’invei hagefen*. And then, when a suitable situation arose, so this Scottish brigand hired someone to plunge a dagger into his *mechutan*, and he himself took over. That’s how he became king. But to better conduct the affairs of the country? Could be; sometimes he was able to do it. But that’s not how he achieved the title “King.”

King and Counselor

When we say *Hashem Melech*, it means something else altogether. *Melech* doesn’t mean “conqueror” or “the one who possesses power.” It’s related to the Aramaic world *milka* which means counsel, advice. Anyone who learned a little knows that in the language of the *mishnah* the word *nimlach* is used for one who changed his mind. *Nimlach* means “he took counsel with himself,” and *melech* denotes, “the one who knows how to take counsel with himself and manage the affairs of a people.” In Torah language, the *melech* is not the one who seized power and rules, but the one who is *most capable* of ruling.

And that's how the *Am Yisroel* said "*Hashem Melech*" in the ancient days. When they spoke about Hashem as king, it meant to them something else than it means to us today. For the ordinary Jew, it wasn't a mere form of speech; it was a living reality, a remarkable awareness of Hashem sitting on a glorious throne, managing the affairs of the world and the affairs of our people in particular.

A Generous Offer

Now, I understand that this may seem to you an exaggerated ideal but I'll show you that our forefathers really lived with it. Because you know there was once a Gideon who was a champion of the Jewish people. Gideon did a great service for the Jewish people; he fought on their behalf and he won many victories and finally he rescued them from their enemies.

After Gideon's victory over Midian, the people were so grateful that they approached him with an offer. They said to him, "You should be our king; and your son after you" (Shoftim 8:22). Now, you have to know what that means that the Jewish people said that. It was the most extreme expression of gratitude. But how did Gideon respond? He said "*Hashem yimshol bachem* – You have a king already. I can't be your king."

The Humble Jewish President

Now to us it would seem like a rejoinder; a wise crack, or exaggerated humility. Suppose the Jews in America decided to choose a man to be, let's say, the President of the Jewish Nation in America. They came to a certain person, a capable fellow, and they want to appoint him president of all the *yeshivos*, of all the orthodox *kehillos*, all the *shuls*. So they come to him with a crown, a *kesser Torah*, and they ask him to please accept the honor.

So he stands up and he says, "Hashem is your king!" Ooh wah! Everybody would applaud that noble sentiment! Of course, they know it means nothing. He's a fine man, a humble man, but the words are only a poetic expression. At least he says it! That's also something!

Gideon Wasn't A Poet

But when Gideon said, "I won't be a *melech* over you," he meant it. He wasn't just saying nice words so that the newspaper could make a write up about him. He meant it from the bottom of his heart. "You don't need a king," he said. "There's a better one already in office."

So what happened? The *Am Yisroel* listened to Gideon and went back to their tents chastened; reminded of the great principle that

Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed. And that's how it remained for many more years.

Part II. Appointing a King

Pshat in Kabbolas Shabbos

We should study together the *pshat* in a *possuk* that we say every Friday night because it's important for our subject. Listen now, so that when you say this *possuk* tomorrow night, you'll know what you're saying: מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכִהְיֵנוּ וְשְׂמוּאֵל בְּקוֹרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ – Moshe and Aharon were among His servants, and Shmuel Hanavi too; they called out in the name of Hashem and He answered them (Tehillim 99:7)

It's an interesting *possuk* because we don't understand why these three are mentioned here. Why are Moshe, Aharon and Shmuel Hanavi mentioned together?

The answer is that the *possuk* is describing an exceptional era of our history that began in the days of Moshe and Aharon and only came to an end during the days of Shmuel.

An Exceptional Era

You remember when the Bnei Yisroel thought they were finally free from Pharaoh's oppression and then they saw Mitzrayim chasing them, so Moshe Rabeinu said: הַשֵּׁם יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם – Hashem is going to fight for you. Now, it's not like we think, that it was a one time event at *kriyas Yam Suf*. Oh no; it was only the beginning. Moshe Rabeinu was saying, "From now on, Hashem your King יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם; He is going to wage all your battles for you. He's your general, your leader, your salvation – He's your everything!"

And that's how it was from the time of Moshe and Aharon down through the time of Shmuel. It was an era when Hashem answered whenever He was called upon. If you study all the incidents of the *Tanach*, from that moment of *kriyas Yam Suf* up until the days of Shmuel Hanavi, you will see that their battles were won *b'derech peleh*. It was a mysteriously wonderful way that they overcame their enemies. *Kor'im el Hashem*, they cried out to Hashem, *v'hu ya'aneim*, and He answered them.

Feeling His Presence

Now, you have to understand that it wasn't for nothing that Hashem fought their battles. It means these generations from Moshe and Aharon and Shmuel were a special kind of people.

What was their greatness? The answer is that *kor'im el Hashem*; they called out only to Hashem because they all recognized that *Hashem Melech!* You have no idea how much they felt it. They actually felt that “*Hashem malkichem.*” And that’s why, in their battles, Hashem fought for them.

“If you know that I’m your king,” said Hashem, “then I’ll be your king!” During those hundreds of years when there was *ein melech b’Yisroel* (Shoftim 21:25), when there was no king in *Yisroel* except for Hashem, the *Am Yisroel* did battle by turning to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. It was the great era of *Hashem yilacheim lachem*, Hashem will fight for you, *v’atem tacharishun*, and you don’t have to do anything. The job of the *Am Yisroel* was only to demonstrate that they were aware of *Hashem Melech* and that He fights for us.

Modern Attitudes Seep In

But after very many years, that great era came to an end. When Shmuel was already advancing in age, an undercurrent of fear began to set in among some of the people. “Shmuel Hanavi is getting old. What’s going to happen when he passes away?” And the Torah nation remembered the *mitzvah* in our *parsha*, “And if you will say, ‘Let us put a king over us,’ *som tasim* – a king you shall appoint.”

And so, and they approached Shmuel Hanavi and said (Shmuel I 8:5): “*שִׂימָה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ* – Please give us a king.” Now, was Shmuel satisfied with the request of the people? After all, it’s a *mitzvah* – *som tasim*. Not at all; he was outraged! “*וַיֵּרַע הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי שְׁמוּאֵל* – It was wicked in the eyes of Shmuel. “What’s this?!” he said. “What do you mean ‘Give us a king!’ You’re rejecting Hashem! Hashem is your king!”

Shmuel was talking the language of the ancient people, the nation who understood that there was a king sitting on the throne guiding their affairs. But the styles had begun to change now. Some of that awareness of *Hashem melech* had begun to dissipate and the people had begun to descend from their old greatness.

A New Era Dawns

Now don’t make any mistake about it, they still said *Hashem melech*. They said it with more fervor than we say it. We can shout all day on Rosh Hashanah, “*Hashem melech, Hashem yimloch l’olam va’ed,*” and still at the end of the day not feel it like they felt it even on a regular weekday. But for a nation whose king is the *Melech Malchei Hamelachim* it was a regression of immense proportion; it was considered a serious misstep, a great error.

Because it was a transformation from a nation who knew that Hashem was their king to a nation who didn't know it as much. They still knew, they knew it very well, but it was nothing like the realization of the previous generations. When they had said *Hashem Melech*, it was like saying, *lehavdil*, we have a president in the White House.

And therefore, at that time, a tremendous change set in. From now on, the era of הַשֵּׁם יְלֵהֵם לְכֶם came to an end. No more would Hashem fight on our behalf like He did in those days. "You want a king?" says Hashem. "So let *him* fight for you!"

A Mitzvah Unlike All Others

Now you understand why there's an introduction to this *mitzvah* of appointing a king: "When you will say, "Let me put over me a king, like all the nations around me, then *som tasim*, you shall appoint a king." Where else in the Torah do you find such a thing?! "When you will say"?! And if you don't say you need a king, it's not a *mitzvah*? If it's one of the *taryag mitzvos* – and it is – the Torah should say "make a king" and finished.

The answer is like this: Do you know when a *melech* is needed? You only need a king of flesh and blood when your understanding that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the actual king becomes dim. "I will set a king over myself like *all the nations that surround me*" (Shoftim 17:14). When your old-time trust in Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not as vibrant as it used to be and you begin to think *k'chol hagoyim*, like all the gentiles, and you want now to live a more natural life, that's when you need a king. When you sink to that level, *v'amarta*, and you'll say, "Asim – I need a king," then *som tasim*, appoint a king; now it's a *mitzvah*.

Now, if a king was wrong, and the people had sinned by even asking, so the whole thing should have been retracted and forgotten about. Shmuel would have chastised the people like Gideon did and it would have been all forgotten. But no; now it became a *mitzvah*. Once you already have put your head into the halter, you have to keep on pulling away. Once you open your mouth and you make yourself a victim who is subject to naturalism then you have to live naturally. It's not a sin; it's a tragedy, but it's not a sin.

Living Off Of Nothing

It's like a *kollel* man. A *kollel* man gets married and he lives off the air. He and his wife are idealists; he has to study Torah and she realizes it, and so they live off of nothing. Even nothing costs something but it comes from somewhere. As long as they're very strong in the quality of *bitachon*, it keeps on coming.

And the *tzaddikim* lived that way all their lives. Rav Simcha Zissel *zichrono livracha*, for example. It was *erev yontif* and they hadn't shopped at all. There was no money in the house. He had a family. The wife was also very pious, but she was looking at him. And he was looking at Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He was walking back and forth in the house and humming a *nigun*. I'm sure the words were something like this: *Ashrei adam oz lo bach – Happy is the man whose strength is in You*. He was walking back and forth and humming those words. If his wife was humming, I don't know – that's not mentioned in the story – but I'm sure that she had confidence too. And then all of a sudden, a letter comes from America just before *yontif* with a big banknote and it was enough to cover everything.

Forced Out of Kollel

But let's imagine now this *kollel* man. After a while, his uncles and his aunts have dinned into his ears – and his wife's ears especially – they've preached to him for so long, “*Ad masai?*” “How long can you keep on with this business already?” And so after a while, he's influenced and he's no longer what he used to be. He begins to think *k'chol hagoyim*, like all of his aunts and uncles. And then finally the day comes when he has to walk out of the *kollel* and look for a job. He must look for a job now because there's nothing to rely on. He has no *bitachon* anymore so hurry up and get a job! Now that he has descended from that *madreigah*, now Hashem is not his *melech* in the same degree as before, he has to work. Now it's a *mitzvah* to work.

It means that as long as a man achieves a high *madreigah* of trust, or genuine *bitachon*, then Hakodosh Boruch Hu requites his trust. And the more a person works on knowing that there's no boss, there's no *gevir*, there's no Rosh Kollel, there's no President Carter and there's no Prime Minister Begin – there's only Hashem Melech, that's the great success in a person's life.

Part III. Coronating The King

Animal Songs

I think most of you have heard of such a thing called *Perek Shirah*. *Perek Shirah*; it's considered a *mitzvah* to say it. It's a lot to say but in the ancient days some people said the entire thing every day.

What is it? In the *Perek Shirah* we have *pesukim*, certain selections from *Tanach*, which are attributed to various animals and birds and

insects. Each species is allotted a certain *possuk* – an ox says this *possuk*, a bird says this *possuk*, a lion a different *possuk*. And there's a reason why each specific animal says its own special *possuk*. That's *Perek Shirah*. It's worth studying in its entirety, but we'll study just one little selection.

The Goose And the Gander

Avaz habar omer – the wild goose says. Now, what the wild goose says is not what the domesticated goose says. The domestic goose says something else; it's mentioned there too, but we're studying now the wild goose. He says as follows: “בְּטַחוּ בְּהֵשֵׁם עָרִי עַד – *Trust in Hashem forever.*”

Why does the wild goose say that? We'll illustrate it by the following story. A wild goose was once flying over a village. Its crop had been empty for a long time; it had nothing to eat for many days already. And as it flew, it looked down and it saw a scene that made its mouth water. It saw fat domestic geese, heavy with *schmaltz*, waddling around in a farmyard. And next to them was standing a kindhearted man with a big bowl of grain who was feeding them. And all the geese were flocking to him.

The Goose Is Cooked

Now, the wild goose watched this scene as he flew by and he felt lonesome and helpless; how he envied these fortunate ones who had such a benefactor who came out and fed them generously, as much as they wanted. But it was a wild goose so it kept on flying.

On the return trip, this goose couldn't avoid flying over the same place. It looked down again, and this time it saw nothing in the barnyard except bloody feathers. It was the remains of the domesticated geese who had relied on the generous farmer. And that's why the wild goose says, “*Bitchu baHashem*, trust in Hashem, *adai ad*, forever and ever, *ki b'kah hashem tzur olamim* – because there's only You Hashem!

The Wild Goose Chase

Now this piece of *Perek Shirah* is supposed to let us know one of the benefits of *bitachon*. The wild goose is telling us that when someone transfers his trust from Hakodosh Boruch Hu to something else then Hakodosh Boruch Hu will put him in the power of that something else. The kind hearted benefactor who comes out with a big bowl of grain, may turn out to be the one who is stuffing him for the slaughter. The goose might be chasing something that's no good at all.

In every case where one transfers his *bitachon* from Hakodosh Boruch Hu to a person or to an object, something is going to happen to teach him a lesson that he made a mistake. It's like when a man trusts in his hands. A man once told his friend, “As long as I have my ten fingers, I

am assured of *parnassah*.” So what happened the same day? His fingers were caught in the machine and he lost them (Chovos Halvavos Shaar Habitachon, 7). And it’s not a punishment – it’s a lesson for him, to take back the trust from his own hands and restore it to the hands of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Emergency Surgery

If a man transfers his *bitachon* from Hakodosh Boruch Hu to his business and then his business goes lost – even if he has nothing at all now – he should be happy. It’s the best thing for him. An operation was made. It’s like a man who had a dangerous tumor and now he walks out of the hospital minus a tumor. He’s minus \$10,000 too, but now he’s happy. He considers it a success because the tumor is gone. So Hakodosh Boruch Hu made an operation and took his business away from him. That was a tumor that caused him to forget about Hakodosh Boruch Hu. But had he had trust in Hakodosh Boruch Hu, he would have had the business and it wouldn’t have been a disease.

So let’s say you graduated – you have a string of diplomas and now any company will take you. Don’t make the error of trusting in them because then something will happen. The bottom will drop out of that profession, and you’ll discover that nobody needs that kind of man anymore.

If a man trusts in his rich uncle, at best the uncle may stop giving him the money. Maybe the uncle becomes bankrupt and maybe he passes away. If you trust in the food stamps, something goes wrong. That’s what happens. By transferring trust to an object or to a person, you’re endangering any benefit you might be receiving because lessons have to be learned in this world.

You Get What You Ask For

That’s why the *Chovos Halevavos* says that if you want to preserve some good fortune, if you want it to continue for you, one of the conditions is make sure you don’t put your trust in it. The only way to preserve your good fortune, is to trust in the One who gave you that good fortune; to always remember that it’s Hakodosh Boruch Hu who gave you that success. That’s the secret to success.

Now, this is actually one of the big principles by which Hakodosh Boruch Hu conducts the affairs of our lives – the more you trust in Hashem, the more your trust is requited. That’s what the Navi Yirmiyah says. בְּרוּךְ הַגֵּבֶר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בַּהֲשֵׁם וְהָיָה הַשֵּׁם מִבְּטָחוֹ – *Fortunate is the one who trusts in Hashem and Hashem becomes his trust (17:7)*. Now, this *possuk* has

two parts to it. In the beginning it states, “Fortunate is the one who trusts in Hashem.” He’s a fortunate man, no question about it. That’s part one of the *possuk*. But what is his reward going to be? *V’hayah Hashem mitvacho* – Hashem turns out to be his trust. Which means that the more one has faith that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is conducting His affairs, the more it actually turns out so!

Hashem Will Help You Out

That’s the great principle of *Hashem Melech* that we’re talking about now – if you make Him your King, that’s exactly what He’ll turn out to be. If a man puts his trust in Hakodosh Boruch Hu then suddenly from the most unexpected source the salvation comes. Things that he didn’t expect to be a profit to him suddenly bring in to him what he needs.

That’s why you must ask Hakodosh Boruch Hu for everything – constantly. Not only in *Shemonah Esrei*. All day long you should be asking Him for everything – for the things you need and also that He should preserve for you the things you already have. If you’re married, say, “Hashem please keep my wife healthy. Give her long life.”

If you’re not married yet, say, “Ribono Shel Olam. Send me a good *shidduch*.” Ask, ask and ask. Because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the best *shadchan*. So, Hakodosh Boruch Hu will say, “Oh, you’re asking Me?! Ok, so I’ll help you out.” And all of a sudden a *shidduch* comes to you from behind your back – not from a *shadchan*. And it’s a good *shidduch*! From the best *shadchan*.

The Beautiful Inexpensive Shidduch

It happened to me that way; one of my children. Now, I’m not saying I have *bitachon* but at least I talk about it. I speak to you about it and I hear my own words, so a little bit rubs off on me. I was sending to *shadchanim* everywhere. But nothing. Nothing was happening. I wanted a *shidduch* for my daughter but nobody was answering.

All of a sudden, a *shidduch* comes up from an unexpected corner. A beautiful *shidduch*! A Rosh Yeshiva calls me up himself and offers me one of his best boys. I was afraid he was going to ask me for money. For such a *metzuyon*, a tremendous amount of money! He called me up another time after they were married about something else and when my wife heard he was on the phone she was still afraid he was going to ask for money.

And so we’re learning now the secret to the famous subject which is known by the name of *bitachon*, the *mitzvah* of acquiring a confidence that one’s affairs are being properly administered by Hakodosh Boruch

Hu. Everyone who hears this immediately thinks that he has it, but we have to realize that it takes a great deal of effort to acquire it. The subject is very big – if you look in the *Chovos Halevavos*, *Sha'ar Habitachon*, you see how big it is. But it's an obligation which we cannot evade – *bitachon* is one of the big accomplishments that a Jew has to achieve in his lifetime and the first step is to realize that *everything* is from Him.

A Free Trip to Ireland

It's an idea we say in *ahavah rabah* every day. *Avinu*, our Father, *ha'av harachaman*, the merciful Father, and then we add, *hamerachem*, the One who has mercy. It seems to be repetitious – the merciful Father, the One who has mercy. But actually each word has a separate meaning. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is *ha'av harachaman*. That describes Him. He's our merciful Father.

But what does *hamerachem* mean? *Hamerachem* means this. Suppose you went out rowing in Coney Island and accidentally you let go of the oars and they drifted away. So you're in a little boat on the ocean being buffeted by the waves. And now you're getting closer and closer to Ireland. And so you say, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu! You are the *av harachaman*; You are the merciful one! *Rachem aleinu!* Please save me!"

The Real Savior

Then, all of a sudden you hear the whirring of a propeller and there's a Coast Guard helicopter coming down. Ah! What a wonderful sound that is! He comes down from the side of the helicopter and he lowers a ladder to you. You seize it and climb up and you hug him. He says, "Mister! I have to fly this thing! Let me drive." But you hug him anyhow; he's your savior!

At that moment you're in great danger because although you won't forget for a moment that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is merciful, you're also thinking that there are other merciful causes in the world. Hashem is the *Av Harachaman*, yes, but you're thinking that it was this Coast Guard man who was the *meracheim*; he's the one who had mercy on you.

And that's why we add the word *hameracheim*; not only is He a merciful father but He is *the meracheim*. He's *the only one* who is *meracheim*. If anybody has mercy on you, it's Hakodosh Boruch Hu who is doing it.

Higher and Higher

Of course, you have to be grateful to the Coast Guard man. You have to be grateful to his superiors who sent him out. But you should always remember what it states: *כִּי גְבוּהַ מַעַל גְבוּהַ שְׂמֹר*, *there's a high one above the high one*. There's an official over this official.

When you start thanking him, he says, “Thank my boss in the Coast Guard Station at Floyd Bennett Field. It was the lieutenant there who sent me out. I was just following orders.” So you visit the lieutenant in the office to thank him but he says, “Mister, I’m only doing my job. I take orders from the Coast Guard headquarters.”

Does The President Know The Truth?

So you travel to the headquarters near Washington D.C. and finally you get into the office in the Pentagon. But they send you to the White House. “The President is my boss.” That’s what the Admiral of the Coast Guard tells you. So you go to President Carter and he says, “Look my friend, I have nothing to do with this. I’m appointed by the Most High and He is the one who saved you.” At least I hope he’ll say that.

But whether the President is wise enough to say it, that’s the truth. And that’s what we’re supposed to remember at all times; *Hamerachem*, He is the one who has pity on us – only Him.

That’s why we say טוב להודות להשם, it is good to give thanks to Hashem, וְלִזְמֹר לְשִׁמְךָ, to sing to Your name, עֲלִיּוֹן, the one who is most high. Why is Hakodosh Boruch Hu called “the most high”? Because He is גְּבוּהַ עֲלֵיהֶם, He is the one who does everything. He’s the only king.

Continuing the Journey to Ireland

And the moment we forget that, then all the subordinates begin to misbehave. The President will forget to give orders, and the Pentagon will shirk its duties, and the Coast Guard headquarters won’t keep tabs on their branches, and the lieutenant will be asleep when the time comes, and the sergeant who went out in the helicopter to find you will look in the wrong place. And you’ll continue on your journey to Ireland.

Of course, sometimes Hakodosh Boruch Hu has purposes. Even though you ignore Him, He’ll bring you home and then you’ll have to face the music in a different way, worse than going to Ireland. Sometimes a man is rescued from one thing for something worse. Sooner or later retribution always catches up with the one who forgets that the one who is doing everything is the *Elyon*.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the one who comes to our rescue through all the means that He provides in nature – and sometimes by means of supernatural rescue too. Whatever the means, natural or supernatural, they are all triggered by the will of the most high. There’s no question that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is in charge. *Hashem melech*, and He’s conducting our affairs with wisdom, and there’s no greater good fortune

than what He's giving to us. And we have to study this and be reminded of that at all times, and as a result, in proportion to our awareness of this, it will turn out so.

Shouting To Yourself

But listening to *me* say it is not enough. It helps, but the more you talk about this like we're talking now, the more *you* talk about it to yourself, the more Hashem becomes the King in your life. You walk in the street and you think “*Hashem melech.*” You can say it too – no harm. Nobody is listening. As you're walking you can even shout it. There's so much din; so much noise from the cars and the trucks and the trains; no one will hear you. Shout “*Hashem melech!*”

You never tried that once in your life?! I don't mean on Rosh Hashana. I'm talking about during the year, on an ordinary Tuesday afternoon. Always tell yourself – you're the most important audience – that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is in charge of the whole universe including you.

I Have Everything

And so, when you're walking on Ocean Parkway and you put your hands in your pocket and nothing jingles in your pocket. You have no money. You have no job. You have no wife. You have nothing. But you walk down Ocean Parkway and say, “I have Hashem. *Hashem melech, Hashem moloch, Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed.*” And that's the way to have things start happening to you. Now the *shadchan* will call you up and say, “I have a rich young lady for you.” You'll get a wife and you'll get money and you'll get everything.

And that's only because as far as you're concerned, you're not interested in saying, “Put a king over me.” That's one *mitzvah* you're not interested in fulfilling because you already have a king; a king who is sitting on His throne taking care of you in the best way possible. And as long as you think that way, as long as you live your life saying “*Hashem melech*” your King will make it come true for you and shower you with a life of happiness.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

How much credence should a Torah Jew give to current medical theories in the field of health and proper nutrition?

A:

As much as common sense requires. That's all we can say. If it's something that one man has recently propounded, and it's not accepted by the body of medical men, so why should you bother? But if it's already so widely accepted, that it has become sensible to follow the advice, then you should do it.

For example, smoking. Today, more or less, most knowledgeable people say that smoking is dangerous to the health. Therefore, it's common sense today. And if a person persists in smoking, so he is transgressing what the Torah says, and therefore he is guilty. There's no question that a person who smokes today is guilty.

Only that there are some ignorant people who don't understand these things. And they think that what their father did, holds forever. And because their father didn't know about germs, they think they could also drink from a dirty cup. There are people like that. They'll drink from a public drinking cup because their father also did! And they think, "My father also smoked; why not?" And the fact that this father might have died from smoking, that doesn't occur to them. Well, he's just an ignoramus. But those people who have some intelligence are required to take into account the accepted medical opinions of the time.

TAPE # 13 (June 1973)

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In honor of my Kallah -Yisroel