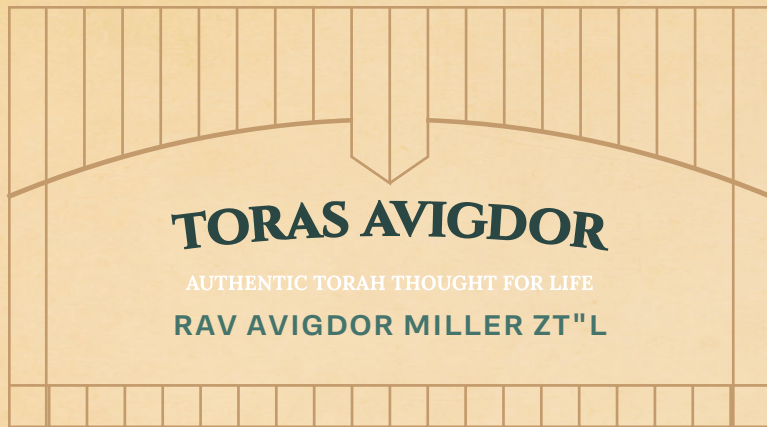




ROSH HASHANA

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE FOUNDATION OF ALL FOUNDATIONS

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Part I. Enthroning the King

The Main Subject

When you look in the *seder hatefillah* of Rosh Hashanah, you see that the core of this day, is *malchiyos* — proclaiming Hashem as the King. And it's so pervasive, so through and through, that we wouldn't be wrong to say that it's not merely the *main* subject but it's the *only* subject. Yes, there are other things, too, but actually *zichronos* and *shofros* and whatever else we say are all connected to that first element. And so we can safely say that the *avodah* of the day is Hashem Melech.

Now, that's a very big question, something that people ask all the time: Is that really the best way to utilize Rosh Hashanah? Shouldn't we spend most of the day praying for our physical and spiritual needs for the upcoming year? After all, this is the day when everything is being decreed; our health and sickness, our *parnassah* or lack of *parnassah*, the good and the bad, *chas v'shalom*. Many people are *nichtav v'nechtam* on Rosh Hashanah; their fate is being sealed now, so it's a day of very great *sakanah*. And so we would think therefore that a great part

of the day should be spent asking, beseeching, begging for our future.

Where's the Teshuvah?

So maybe you'll tell me that we'd like to ask and ask and ask but we can't be busy with that because we have to do a big *teshuvah* first. After all, that's what the decree depends on most — our *teshuvah*. But if that's the case, then at least *that* we should be doing on Rosh Hashanah. We should be busy with the *al cheits* all day, with *vidui* and *charatah* and *kabalah l'asid*, with asking *mechilah*, all the elements of *teshuvah*. But instead of all that we're proclaiming Hashem Melech all day long; *tefillah* and *piyutim* about the Kingship of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Of course, every sane person, anyone who's interested in doing what's right, makes sure to do *teshuvah* before Rosh Hashanah. You must ask *mechilah* before Rosh Hashanah. Don't delay! If you are in Eretz Yisroel and your mother is here, call up your mother long distance and ask her, "Please mother, remember when I was thirteen years old and you asked me to carry out the garbage and I said, 'Let Dovid do it'? Mother, please forgive me." A mother is a mother; she will forgive you.

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If you said something mean to your wife or something mean to your husband, you have to ask *mechilah*. R' Itzele Peterberger, every *erev Rosh Hashanah* when he left his home to go to the *beis haknesses*, he turned to his wife and he said, “*Zeit mir mochel*. Please forgive me.” And she said, “*Zeit mir mochel*.”

It's a good idea for everyone, by the way; before you set out to the *beis haknesses* on *Rosh Hashanah* to *daven Maariv*, you turn back and say, “*Rochel*, forgive me.” Isn't that a beautiful way to begin the year? And she says, “*Chaim*, forgive me.” You hear that *eitzah*? That's an excellent way to go into *Rosh Hashanah*, with *teshuvah* and *mechilah*. Very important!

Missing the Merkaz

But we see that once we go into the day, we forget about that subject altogether. It's only *Hashem Melech*; the *piyutim*, the *brachos*. That's what we're focused on and so it seems to us that *ha'ikar chaseir min hasefer*. All that precious time could be utilized in *teshuvah*, asking *Hashem* for forgiveness! We could be taking sins off that side of the scale that's threatening our future. *Chas v'shalom*, if the side of *chovah* is heavier, who says we'll get a second chance?

And so instead of saying *וְתִמְלֹךְ אֲתָהּ ה' מְהֵרָה לְבָרְךָ*, if it was up to us we would spend more time talking about things that people are *nichshal* in. There should be whole pieces of *piyut* about *shemiras halashon*. It would be very beneficial. Maybe a long *piyut* about *kibud av v'eim* and another one about greeting your fellow Jew *b'sever panim yafos*. Whole pieces of *machzor* should deal with *shalom bayis* and about how someone else's property is *kodesh*. It's very important. Instead of the *chazzan* singing about the *malachei marom* proclaiming *Hashem King*, let him sing about how *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* wants us to treat people.

After all, *bein adam l'chaveiro* is the obligation we have to be worried most about; the majority of our responsibilities, our *mitzvos* and *aveiros*, occur

in the realm of our interpersonal relationships. A Jew sometimes imagines he'll come into the synagogue and he'll just be by himself. He'll do *mitzvos* and just commune with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* like a monk in his cell. Oh no! That's not Judaism!

Judaism 101

Yahadus means living with everybody else properly. You have to react to people in the right way! You have to take in visitors, wayfarers! You have to pay money, *tzedakah*! You have to do *chessed*! You have to say kindly words always! You have to be careful what you say! When you pass somebody in the street, you have to greet them if you know them! You have to always keep in mind the other person's desires. וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ – Just like you want people to show you regard and respect, that's how you have to react to others (*Vayikra 19:18*). That's the difficulty of being a Jew — to deal with your fellow man properly.

Bein adam l'chaveiro is extremely difficult, extremely all-encompassing, and it's a severe obligation! Like people say, “*S'iz shver tzu zein a Yid*.” Man was created for the purpose of serving *Hashem* primarily by means of his fellow Jews and that's the place that most people are *nichshal* most constantly.

The Maggid Speaks

That's why when the old-time *maggid* came to town, he spoke primarily about that. Because everybody kept everything. You think the *maggidim* had to tell the men to cover their heads with a hat? It was unthinkable for a Jew to walk with a bare head through the streets of his town. It would be easier to walk without a head at all. It's a fact!

Every man wore *tzitzis*. You could eat in any Jewish house without asking any questions. It was perfectly kosher, no matter where you went. They used to say, “If his name is *Mendel*, you could eat from his *fendel*, his pan.” And everyone was named *Mendel* or some other Jewish name — there were no Normans or Jeffreys there.

Everybody kept Shabbos. All of them went to the *beis haknesses* every day. No girl wore a cut-down dress; everybody was dressed *b'tznius*. You think when the *maggidim* spoke about *teshuvah* two hundred years ago, they had to say, "Women! You have to cover your hair!" They didn't even have to speak about natural *sheitels*, *sheitels* that are too long. Who wore *sheitels* then? Wigs look human, look natural. No. They wore a cloth over their heads.

So what did the *maggid* say? The *maggid* spoke about one thing: *bein adam l'chaveiro*. He spoke also about learning Torah, yes, but *bein adam l'chaveiro*, that was number one. Because that obligation is number one that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants of man.

Work in Progress

And it involves a lot of work. It's heavy lifting. Everyone knows what Hillel told a certain *ger* (Shabbos 31a). This man wanted to study the entire Torah on one foot, so Hillel said, "Pick up your foot and let's go. *וְעַלְךָ סֵי לְחֻבְרָךְ לֹא תַעֲבֹד* – What you don't like people to do to you, don't do to them, *זוֹ הִיא כָּל הַתּוֹרָה בְּלִיָּה* – That's the whole Torah in one line, but *וְאֵידֶךָ פְּרוּשָׁה* – the rest of it is coming to explain that; it's the details, and so *יֵלְךָ גָּמֹר* – go out and get busy learning." Because the entire Torah is a commentary on this principle and it needs a commentary. Don't think that because you know the principle so it's all settled now because you know you're okay in your dealing with a fellow man anyhow – other people are not so good in dealing with you, but you're fine when it comes to dealing with them.

So Hillel said, "Forget about that. There's a big commentary that you have to learn still. Bava Kamma, Bava Metzia, Bava Basra. Also Brachos, Shabbos, Eiruvim and Pesachim don't hurt either. You need all these commentaries on this great principle."

Like R' Yisroel Salanter said, "You have to learn and learn in order to know how to be *yotzei* with your fellow man." You'd be surprised how much you

have to know in order to be a decent person to your fellow man. I was once talking to a man in the street. I didn't see him for a long time so he shook my hand and he was saying, "Oh, Rabbi Miller, I'm so glad to see you." And he tells me, "The last two weeks I have a terrible cold. I'm still suffering from it." And he's shaking my hands and talking into my face.

I was thinking, "My friend, you have a lot to learn." He's a *talmid chacham*, by the way. "If you have a cold, you don't shake hands with anybody. And don't talk into their face either. You're a *mazik*. What are you doing? You never learned." So there's a lot to learn. *Bein adam l'chaveiro* is the great majority of our Torah obligations; it's the majority of our accomplishments in this world and the majority of our reward in the World to Come.

The Purpose of the Day

And therefore, if that's what makes a Jew so when it comes to the days of *teshuvah* and you'll ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu to forgive you, you have to know that the most important forgiveness you're seeking is for the sins *bein adam l'chaveiro*. The biggest part of your *kabalah l'asid*, your intentions to make this coming year a better one, is in the details of *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

And if that's the most important thing and today might be the most important day for the rest of the year – maybe even the rest of your life – so how can we just spend the time proclaiming Hashem the King? Say it once and then we should sit around tables and study Bava Kamma. We'll stop a few minutes to hear *shofar*, yes. We have to *daven* also a *Yom Tov Shemoneh Esrei* and hear *krias haTorah* too, but right away we should get back to the *avodah* of the day, of rectifying our *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

Even if you want to be *davening* all day, I'm sure they could make nice *niggunim* for this subject. A nice tune for the words *לְעוֹלָם יְהִי אָדָם זָהִיר בְּאוֹנָתָא אִשְׁתּוּ – be careful not to hurt your wife's feelings, שְׂמִתוֹךְ שְׂדֵמְעָתָה מְצִיָּה אוֹנָתָה קְרוּבָה – because a woman*

is tender-hearted and she weeps more easily, and so the sin is readily at hand (Bava Metzia 59a). That would be a beautiful thing to sing about. Imagine the *chazzan* singing a *niggun* on Rosh Hashanah: “Leooooooham, יְיָהוָה בְּכָבוֹד אֶשְׁתָּו, tra-la-la.” But not like I’m doing it. They could do better, good, inspiring *niggunim*. Isn’t that important?

Why is it Important?

The answer is it’s very important. But number one is to understand *why* it’s important. Why do you have to have *kevod ishto*? Everything is only because Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants it! Why are you careful with your fellow man’s feelings? Because Hashem Melech! Why do you have to be concerned with his property? Because Hashem Melech! Why do you have to be careful with *shemiras halashon*? Because Hashem Melech! And otherwise it’s worthless.

I’ll repeat that because it’s so important, and that’s going to be our subject now. Without the ingredient of Hashem Melech, everything that you’ll do on Rosh Hashanah, all of your *teshuvah* for your *bein adam l’chaveiro* and all of your planning to be better in the future, ends up being worthless.

Part II. Fearing the King

The King is Watching

Now, don’t walk out when you hear that. Some people don’t like that idea, that decency and kindness can be nothing. So let me explain. I’m going to say two reasons and you’ll see why this is the subject of Rosh Hashanah.

Number one: Without “Hashem Melech,” *bein adam l’chaveiro* won’t have a *kiyum*; it won’t last. That’s a very important point! It’s only if there’s a Melech, then there could be such a thing as *bein adam l’chaveiro*; otherwise, it fades away into nothing.

That’s what it means ה' מֶלֶךְ יִרְגֵזוּ עַמִּים – When Hashem is King, all the nations tremble (Tehillim 99:1). It’s only when ה' מֶלֶךְ – when a person is aware

that Hashem is in charge, יִרְגֵזוּ עַמִּים – then people will be afraid. When you know that there’s a *din v’cheshbon*, that eventually you’ll be standing before a King Who is not *mevater* and that you’ll be called to task for everything, that’s the only way that a person can become perfect *l’chaveiro*. When people know there’s a King, a King sitting on a Throne dispensing judgment, that’s when they can restrain themselves; that’s when they can check their *middos* and emotions and become perfect in their dealings with their fellow man.

And so it’s the one who stands in the shul all day on Rosh Hashanah shouting that Hashem is the King, he’s the one most liable to be a *mentch* all year long. Of course he has to listen to what he’s saying. If he’s trying to keep the tune or he’s thinking about what’s going to be on the table for the *seudas yom tov*, so it doesn’t go in as much. But if he’s utilizing the *davening*, then these two words, “Hashem Melech” and all its variations — that’s going to be the foundation for his behavior *bein adam l’chaveiro* during the year.

Empty Ethics

But included in the first reason is something more. It’s not only because we’re aware of the King Who’s demanding something and we’re afraid. It’s because the entire concept of *bein adam l’chaveiro* is a creation of Hashem. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu made the world, He created ethics. Just like the world is created by Hashem, the ideals are created by Him. Otherwise there’s no such thing as being righteous. Without believing in the Creator, the whole thing is as silly as could be.

That’s why it was the silliest thing when the Reform rabbis recently got together in Boston and in order to show how good they are, so every one of them got up to criticize America for not having ethics. Each one was speaking with the same words, “Ethics, ethics.”

Ethics, shmethics! You’re all atheists! You don’t believe in a Creator! It’s only for the press, to make an impression. It’s only window dressing, showing

off. Why should there be ethics? You crooks! You fakers! What are you talking about ethics? None of these things have any basis unless you believe in a Creator Who created the concepts. All of these ideals were introduced to the world by people who believed in a Borei and in the Chumash.

Frog Ethics

The evolutionists, the humanists, the academicians, they have no reason why there should be any ethics in the world. According to them, men are the result of accidents; they're derived from frogs, so what's wrong if A will mistreat B? How can you believe in ethics if you developed from a frog? A frog has no ethics.

And so when a student in college cheats on the test and the professor becomes angry and he says, "You know you're hurting your fellow classmates! Where are your morals, your ethics?" So the student can say, "Didn't you teach us that we're descended from the algae? What ethics are there in a mud puddle? It's an accident! Why do you expect ethics from me? The only thing wrong is getting caught."

And so they're bluffers. They have absolutely no justification for any kind of decency or kindness. And so it's chaos — without Hashem Who teaches us universal concepts, the world is chaos. There's no such thing as right or wrong. It's all a deception. The only reason they still mouth words such as "liberty" and "equality" and "justice" is because they are a holdover from the old generations who still believed in a G-O-D. They're only repeating words that have no foundation anymore.

A Shaky Ladder

You know what it is? It's like a fellow who climbed up on a ladder and now he's standing above everybody else. He says, "Look how high I am. I'm above all of you. So now I'll kick the ladder from underneath me and I'll remain. I don't need a ladder anymore." And he kicks the ladder from beneath him and plop, down he goes. He's lower than everybody else now. He's prostrated on the floor.

So the liberals climbed that ladder which was erected by the Torah which taught us what's right. And then, when they kicked the ladder from underneath them, they still imagine that they have ethics. How long will they remain in the air after they kick the ladder from under their feet?

And don't believe these people who say you can be decent and righteous even though you're an atheist. Let's say a humanist — a humanist is a man who doesn't have any Hashem. So he writes in the New York Times: "I don't need Hashem because I follow my conscience. My conscience is enough to guide me to do what's right."

So you ask him, "What conscience was guiding Hitler? When Hitler killed six million innocent people, he was following his conscience, too. Is that the kind of conscience you want to rely on? And all the bums who abuse people and murder follow their conscience, too. So is your conscience any guide for you?"

Caring Communists

And if you want to know a beautiful example, so remember how in 1916 the Nihilists in Russia were throwing bombs against the Czar's officials because of "injustice." The Czar was accused as an oppressor, a tyrant, and these people were fighting to help the oppressed lower classes, the proletariat. They cared about people, oh yes. They were fighting for *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

And at first sight, a lot of people fell for them because their slogan was to help the downtrodden masses. It looked like a movement of compassion for the majority of people, of *bein adam l'chaveiro*, and in the beginning it was. And that's why, unfortunately, very, very many Jews were inveigled into accepting the Bolsheviks' ideology. Because they grew up with that ideal; it was in their bones this ideal of *bein adam l'chaveiro*, from the home, from the *cheder*, from the Jewish street. And so a lot of Jews became enthusiastic communists at that time.

G-dless Communists

But they made one big mistake. They imagined that without Hashem they could build a utopian society, a beautiful place of *bein adam l'chaveiro*. What happened? Finally, the great day came when the Bolsheviks seized power. And in the first year, they killed at least one million people! The Bolsheviks murdered more people than any regime up to their time. Later the Nazis came along with greater love; they came along with Christian love and they did a better job of loving but we're talking now about 1918. When the Bolsheviks took over, a million persons were shot. That was immediately; soon after, more millions were shot.

In America it's not so well known, but I happened to have been there not long afterwards and I spoke to survivors, people who saw how the Bolsheviks went on a spree of murder. An old Jew told me the story. He witnessed it. He was in the town of Yanovch and he remembers when the Bolsheviks came to the town they brought in a big metal box on wheels. And the box had holes in the sides and they filled it with capitalists. Anybody who was a capitalist was put in that box.

Who was a capitalist? If you were a poor shoemaker but you had an apprentice who worked for you, the apprentice came and accused his employer of exploitation. "He made me get up early to go to work. He sent me on errands."

Murderous Communists

Oh, he's an exploiter of the proletariat! So they had a kangaroo court, and they sentenced him and immediately he was put in the box. And when the box was full — they didn't want to waste bullets — they put a couple of gun barrels into the hole, and they shot so that one bullet should go through a couple of people. And all day long the sound of the bullets was rattling against the tin metal sides of that box.

When they were all finished with the victims, they rolled the box downhill to the stream and poured them all out, and they went back uphill

again and started all over again. All day long this machine was working. An old Jew told it to me, an eyewitness.

And who were they killing? Poor people. Poor Jews. All the people who they said they were coming to help. Eventually, almost all of the Jewish communist leaders were executed by the Russians. They were taken down in the basement of the Lubyanka Prison and other prisons and there they were given the treatment. In Russia it's called by a nice name, "liquidation." Nobody is "killed" in Russia. They just liquefy you. It means you disappear. You just are not there anymore.

Belated Rosh Hashanah Lessons

Now, this Jewish communist who had given his heart and his soul to the communists, when he was standing in the dank basement of Lubyanka and the Russian pulled out a big gun and held it in front of his face and the Jewish communist knew that in one minute he'll be sent off to the other world, what did he learn at that moment? He learned an important lesson. He learned that the Bolsheviks do not love people. The entire ideal of love, of compassion, was one huge hoax. The Bolshevik love of the proletariat ended up being a hoax because there was no Hashem.

So you see here the beautiful working of social justice, of ethics, of *bein adam l'chaveiro* without Hashem Melech. It's only when you know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "This I consider *tov* and this I consider not *tov*," and you know that He'll dispense justice, in this world and the Next World, only then can a person live with *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

Corruption on Kings Highway

And that's why today you can watch people who come to the fruit stands and they sample a grape here, a little peanut, and they walk away. They have no *hargasha* in stealing property from somebody. I saw that on Kings Highway last week. A woman standing in front of a fruit stand; she took an apricot

and ate half of it and put it back. Then she bought other apricots but her apricot she left half-eaten.

I told her, “You’re stealing.” But it’s like a wooden head; go talk to a wood mannequin. Nothing goes into their heads because it’s empty of *Hashem Melech*.

A *frum* Jew, however, has a *hargasha*. Why? Because he was in shul on Rosh Hashanah. He was listening to what he was saying, that Hashem is in charge. And that’s why Rosh Hashanah is so important. It’s a tremendous accomplishment to say *Hashem Melech* a thousand times – even a thousand times is not enough – until it begins to settle a little bit into our thick skull. Each time it goes in a little more that there’s a Melech Ha’olam watching everything, a King Who demands living up to His requirements of *bein adam l’chaveiro*.

Part III. Honoring the King

A Worthless Perfection

Now, this principle that without being *mamlich* Hakadosh Baruch Hu as King there’s no foundation, no *kiyum*, for *bein adam l’chaveiro*, is only the beginning of the story. On its own it’s a very good reason why the focus of Rosh Hashanah is *Hashem Melech* but there’s a second, more important reason.

Suppose you find someone who is capable of being careful with *bein adam l’chaveiro* according to their true principles and even maintaining that vigilance; and he does it all without regard to a King. It’s impossible, but let’s just imagine so. Even then it’s worthless. Even if a person is the most kind, the most helpful, the most considerate and generous person, the most perfect in *bein adam l’chaveiro*; if he’s not doing it because of the King, because Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded it, then it’s nothing.

Paid Off in This World

Now, when I say worthless, one thing I have to add. *אֵין הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְקַפֵּחַ שְׂכָר כֹּל בְּרִיָּה* – *Hashem*

does not withhold the reward for any creature (Bava Kamma 38b). If someone fulfills a worthwhile function in this world, if he’s kind to people, if he’s helpful, then Hakadosh Baruch Hu sees to it that he is compensated. But it’s a meager reward because he’ll be paid off only in this world. He did it only for this world, so he’ll get his reward only here.

That’s what it means in the Mishnah that there are good deeds that a person is *אוֹכֵל פְּרוּתֵיהֶם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה* – *he eats the fruit of his deeds in this world* (Pe’ah 1:1). And it enumerates there a number of things, mostly *bein adam l’chaveiro*. If you do various kindnesses to your fellow man, you’ll be rewarded in this world.

A Great Principle of Nature

So the Rambam says: Why is that? Why do you enjoy the fruits *bein adam l’chaveiro* in this world?

So listen to a pragmatic explanation by the Rambam, a *pashut* business-like explanation. He says it’s natural; if you’re a pleasant person and you do favors to other people, so people will be the same way with you.

Now, don’t think the Rambam is just saying something *stam*. It’s a *yesod gadol* the Rambam is telling us. He wants us to know that this is the plan of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. It’s “natural” means it’s the *dvar Hashem* that if you do all those things of kindness, it’s going to redound to your own benefit. This world is so contrived that if you’re nice to others, they’ll be nice to you.

Eating Fruit in Olam Hazei

So you’ll be good to your spouse, your spouse will be good to you. Like it says in *sefer Menoras Hamaor* (Ner Shlishi, Klal 6, 4:2), “Make your husband a king and he’ll make you a queen.” You hear that? I’ll repeat that because it’s a gem. He said to the women: If you try to beat your husband down and make a nothing out of him, so he’ll make a nothing out of you. But if you make your husband a king, he’ll make you a queen.

And it's not only for husbands and wives. It's the same thing for everyone else — with your neighbors, your co-workers, the people you meet in the synagogue. If you're good in *bein adam l'chaveiro*, people will be good in *bein adam l'chaveiro* to you. If you are humble to people, if you are patient, you're friendly, you smile to people, you let them talk and you listen, you don't speak against anybody, you don't hurt anybody's feelings, certainly you'll become popular and treated well because of that.

"That's My decree," Hakadosh Baruch Hu says. "I want people to be encouraged to behave towards each other properly, and therefore I'm going to make it turn out that the kind people will be rewarded with kindness in this world." That's the *הַזָּה פְּרוּתֵיהֶם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה* the Mishnah is talking about.

The Big Rub

But here's the rub. If you're doing it only for that — if you're doing it only like a liberal, because you think it's nice to be nice — so that will be the extent of your reward. Hashem says, "People liked you? They treated you well? So I'm finished with you now. I paid you off. But the real reward, the *קֶדֶר קִיּוּמָהּ* *לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא*, the reward of Olam Haba that you came into this world to achieve, that you'll be shut out from entirely."

Because to be with Hashem in Olam Haba is only if you're serving Hashem. If you're a good person for any other reason, whatever it is, it's worthless. If a man is kindhearted to people but he's an agnostic, he's an atheist, so it doesn't mean anything. Hakadosh Baruch Hu pays him some reward in this world. He'll be popular. If he's an *anav* for business purposes, Hakadosh Baruch Hu pays him off and he'll get more customers.

But that's it. He won't get anything more than a few lousy dollars. A big waste of life! If people are nice to others and do favors because they like to do favors but they're not doing it because the Borei told them, they're wasting their lives because there's only one purpose in our lives and that is *לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ אֱלֹהֵי הַפְּצָתִי* — I want to do Your will,

Hashem (Tehillim 40:9). The great achievement is only when you add that big ingredient — Hashem.

And all ideals are empty without Hashem. And so when you read an advertisement: "Donate to support poor children in Zimbabwe," and it's in a newspaper of atheists, you know the whole thing is nothing at all. It's not worth a penny. Without Hashem, there's no mitzvah of helping the poor! *Chessed* is only built on the idea that *כִּי חָפֵץ חֶסֶד הוּא* — that Hashem desires kindness (Micha 7:18). When people subtract Hashem, then the ideal becomes empty and meaningless.

The First Teshuvah

And if that's the case, we understand why Rosh Hashanah is all about *Hashem Melech*. Because it's a new year now, new opportunities, and so let's start from the foundation. Certainly, you have to do a big teshuvah. Certainly, you have to learn all the *dinim bein adam l'chaveiro*. But now we're busy talking about the *yesod hayesodos*.

You're going to come into shul on Rosh Hashanah in front of the *Melech Malchei Hamelachim* and you're going to sing a *piyut* about *shemiras halashon*, about caring for your fellow Jew, about *kevod ishto*? You're not ready for that yet. First, you have to make clear to yourself what it's all about.

Why should you do anything in this world? Who cares that it's a fellow Jew? Who's *ishto*? Forget about her. The fact that you put a ring on her finger and said *הִרִי אֶת מְקַדְשָׁת*? You did that already. You can forget about it now.

No! Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "If you forget about that, you're forgetting about Me! Because I'm the One Who commanded you to honor your wife. I'm the One Who commanded you to honor your fellow Jew. You're honoring Me!"

Honoring Who?

That's what the Mishnah in Avos (4:1) says. *אִיזְהוּ הַמְכֻבָּד אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת* — *Who is an honored person? Someone who honors people*. If you treat others

with respect, then Hashem will see to it that you are honored, too. And it brings a proof from a possuk: שְׁנֵאָמַר בִּי מְכַבְּרִי אֶכְבֹּד – Hashem says, “Those who honor Me I shall honor.”

What kind of proof is that? Honoring Hashem means you go to the shul and *daven*. Honoring Hashem means you'll buy the most beautiful *esrog*. Honoring Hashem means you'll learn Torah. But when you honor your fellow man, what's the connection? All right, if you honor Hashem you'll be honored. But if you honor your fellow man?

And so we see that it's one thing. When you treat your fellow man with *kavod*, when you help him, when you're careful with his feelings, that's called honoring Hashem. Why is that? Because that's what Hashem wants. Hashem declared, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם – *man is a tzelem Elokim* (Bereishis 9:6). Why did He tell us that? Who cares? It's because He wants people to honor each other as a result of that. הַבֵּיב אָדָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּצֶלֶם – *How beloved is a man that he's created as a tzelem!* And your fellow Jew? חֲבֵה יִתְּרָה נֹדַעַת לָהֶם – *There's an additional piece of information that Hashem tells us, שֶׁנִּקְרָאוּ בָּנִים לְמִקּוֹם – that a Jew is a child of Hashem* (Avos 3:14).

Ooh wah! Every Jew is a prince! Every Jew is *kodesh kedoshim*! That's an entirely new *bein adam l'chaveiro* now, because it's backed up by Hashem Melech. He's not just a fellow Jew; he's Hashem's child, a prince. If it's Hashem Melech, then all the ideals spring up and become alive. וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדִרְכָיו – *You're walking in the ways of Hashem* (Devarim 28:9). The one who utilizes Rosh Hashanah, so all year long he'll say, זֶה אֲנִי-לִי וְאֵנִי־הוּא – *This is my Hashem and I'm going to be like Him*. מָה הוּא רַחוּם אִף אֵתָּה רַחוּם – *Since He's merciful, so I'm going to walk in His ways and be merciful, too* (Shabbos 133b).

The King's World

Hashem Melech! There's a King here! Otherwise, what's your friend? What's the terrible thing if you cheat him out of something? Is it so bad if you step on his lawn or use his rake without permission? But

when it's backed up by Hashem Melech it's entirely different. You remember that לַהּ הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוּאָה – *the earth and everything in it belongs to Hashem* (Tehillim 24:1), only that וְהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לַבְּנֵי אָדָם – *He gave us permission to use it* (ibid. 115:16). So it's a different story now. Because He gives us permission only with certain conditions.

Certain places you can't walk. Suppose it belongs to somebody else, you have no right to walk into his territory because Hashem didn't give you permission. Private property really is Hashem's property. What belongs to one person is *kodesh*. And therefore, if you use it, it means you are taking what belongs to Hashem because it's only He who gives you permission.

So as a result of Rosh Hashanah *davening*, the world becomes a different world. Your wife, your *chaveirim*, your fellow Jews are *tzelem Elokim*, they're *banim laMakom*, and you'll walk in the ways of Hashem and love them and honor them and be only a *tov u'meitiv* to them. And your fellow Jew's property, whatever he owns, belongs to Hashem. He only permitted that man who made a *kinyan*, who acquired the ownership. So you're not infringing only on *bein adam l'chaveiro*; you're trespassing against Hashem Melech.

The Rosh Hashanah Recharge

And therefore, Rosh Hashanah is capable of breathing into man an entirely new spirit of how to live in this world. And we all need that spirit; people, no matter how good they are, must have from time to time a spiritual recharging of their batteries. And you can never have enough of that recharging. You have to pile up so much of the dynamo, of the battery, of the energy during Rosh Hashanah, so much *hargasha* of Hashem Melech, that all the good things you do all year long are going to be the result of the *yesod hayesodos* that you gained on the first two days of the year.

It means that the *avodah* of Hashem Melech, Hashem Malach, Hashem Yimloch L'Olam Va'ed, is capable of transforming his entire year from

something almost worthless into treasures. When we spend the first two days of the year reinforcing this foundation, so everything we do after that is backed up by *Hashem Melech*. It's not only Olam Hazei anymore; now it's *avodas Hashem*. It's הקִּיָּץ קִיָּמָה לֹא לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. We're living with our feet in both worlds at the same time.

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Let's Get Practical

At the King's Service

Although our very lives and livelihoods are determined on Rosh Hashanah, and thus it is appropriate to *daven* accordingly, the central focus of the day is *not* on temporal matters but rather on coronating Hakadosh Baruch Hu as King. This is to send a loud and clear message: all pursuits, including kindness between man and his fellow, are devoid of meaning without *Hashem Melech*.

This year, *bli neder*, starting on Rosh Hashanah itself, whenever I do an act of kindness for another Jew, I will consciously remind myself that I am doing it because it is the *ratzon Hashem* that I should emulate Him — the Creator Who is חֲפִיץ חֶסֶד.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

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QUESTION

Should I go into Rosh Hashanah with *simcha* because it is Yom Tov or with trepidation because it's the Yom Hadin?

ANSWER

And the answer is you have to do both. *Gilu bera'adah!* You have to tremble and rejoice. It's a Yom Tov; no question about it, there's *simchas Yom Tov*. But on Rosh Hashanah כָּמֹה דְּכִיף אֵינִישׁ דְּעֵתָה טָפִי מַעְלִי – *the more a person is bent over in his mind, the better off he is* (Rosh Hashanah 26b). The more he's afraid on Rosh Hashanah, the better off he is. Be afraid on Rosh Hashanah! It's very important.

You don't remember, but in the olden days, Jews wept on Rosh Hashanah. Our great-grandparents wept on Rosh Hashanah דְּמַעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ. It's very important to weep on Rosh Hashanah. You should be afraid. It's the Yom Hadin. In our minds, we should get the idea that we're standing before the great Judge. That's an important attitude that we have to form in our mind — the cognizance, the awareness that Hashem is judging the world, that He is the *Dayan*, the King, Who rules everything and you're going before Him now for a trial.

You know, people are afraid of a trial. Imagine *chas v'shalom* they're calling you for a small thing before a judge, even for a small thing. You're afraid. I had a man here who had to be in court for a certain reason, a small thing, and I remember his eyes were twitching. He was a nervous wreck because he had to go before a judge.

And to come before the great Judge! And you can't deceive Him. No lawyer is going to intercede for you there. And so the greatest fear is necessary, certainly.

And the more fear you have on the Yom Hadin, the more you're succeeding in formulating in your mind the proper attitudes for which you deserve to get a year of happiness and all the things you're looking for.

September 1994