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Rosh Hashanah | Sanctifying The Seven Gates

Hameir Laarets
Spreading Torah Around The World

MESILLOT
Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

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Rosh Hashanah

Meet The President

One of the prominent charity organizations in the United States decided to launch a fundraising campaign and organized a lottery for this purpose.

The organizers approached the President of the United States at the time, Bill Clinton, and presented him with an intriguing proposition, "We understand that your schedule is busy, but if you can spare just fifteen minutes of your time, we believe we can turn it into millions of dollars."

The President willingly agreed to cooperate, expressing his readiness to contribute the fifteen minutes if it could indeed be translated into millions of dollars. However, he had one pressing question, "How do you plan to achieve this feat? How can fifteen minutes be transformed into millions of dollars?"

The organizers explained their plan, "We will sell tickets, and the lucky winner will receive a visit from the President at their home for fifteen minutes!"

With a mutual understanding, the lottery was conducted, and the fortunate winner turned out to be an *avrech* from the Lakewood Yeshiva.

This young *avrech* found himself at a loss with this unexpected prize. Did he really need President Clinton to visit his home? What is he supposed to do with him? Would it not be more appropriate to invite someone like Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky? How could he properly honor the President's visit – perhaps with a humble lox bagel? Should he renovate his home to impress the distinguished guest?

Eventually, the *avrech* managed to speak with one of the

President's advisors. The advisor shared an intriguing piece of information, "Allow me to reveal something to you. Thirty years ago, during his time in the army, the President cherished a particular emotional military song. Although it seems to have been forgotten over the years, it remained his most beloved song."

The *avrech* from Lakewood saw an opportunity and approached the organizers, proposing, "Let's collaborate on something special !" They enlisted the services of a renowned violinist from the United States, along with three other talented musicians. They provided the musicians with the cherished song and agreed to perform it with utmost emotion when the President arrived.

The day of the visit arrived as scheduled. The President of the United States stepped through the door and entered the *avrech's* home. The violinist greeted him with the treasured song, and memories flooded the President's mind. Captivated by the music, he settled into the living room, fully engrossed in the performance. The violinist played with such profound emotion that even after ten minutes, discernible glimmers of emotion were visible in the President's eyes. With the conclusion of the music, only five minutes remained of the visit.

Addressing the *avrech*, the President said, "Listen. I travel the world extensively, and everywhere I go, I am served lavish meals – Chinese delicacies, Thai dishes, Parisian cuisine... Consequently, I often find myself needing to shed the excess calories I accumulate during these meals."

"However," the President continued, "you did not serve me a meal today. Instead, you offered me a simple soda, but it was evident that you put thought into how to honor me, make me happy, and touch my heart. I haven't been moved to tears in years – and now, look into my eyes... You received me with all your heart, and you succeeded in opening mine."

At this moment, the President pulled out a small card from his pocket, revealing a phone number, and said, "This number is reserved for heads of states for emergency contact. I'm giving you this number, and I invite you to call me whenever you need anything..."

This heartwarming tale is not a mere parable but an actual event that occurred.[1] The *avrech* from Lakewood managed to arouse in the President's heart a sincere desire to be in touch with him. On the subject of awakening desire in our parasha...

The Essence of The Day

The essence of Rosh Hashanah isn't explicitly explained in the Torah; it is simply referred to as the day of "Zichron Teruah" – a remembrance of blowing the shofar. But why is this day so significant that everyone prepares for it with awe ? *Chazal* have shed light on its unique aspects: It is the Day of Judgment, the beginning of the Ten Days of Repentance, the anniversary of Adam's creation, and much more.

However, at its core, Rosh Hashanah's primary essence can be understood as a single focal point that branches out into several meaningful details. Just like other holidays, each has its distinctive content that we celebrate.

According to the teachings of chassidut, the essence of Rosh Hashanah lies in the coronation of Hashem as the King over the world. For the Mishna says, "The mitzvah of the day is with the shofar," (Rosh Hashanah 3:3) and the shofar serves a specific purpose, as *Chazal* say (Rosh Hashanah 16a): Hashem said, "On Rosh Hashanah, say before Me *Malchuyot* (kingship), *Zichronot* (remembrances), and *Shofarot* (shofar blasts). Kingship, so that you should make Me your King; Remembrances, so that your remembrance should rise

1. Doresh Tov (Sukkot, p. 772)

favorably before Me; and through what will the remembrance rise ? It will rise with the shofar."

From this statement, we can infer that the primary aspect of Rosh Hashanah is the acceptance of Hashem's kingship.

Furthermore, when we examine the prayers of Rosh Hashanah, we immediately notice that the theme of kingship pervades all the prayers. While verses of *"Zichronot"* and *"Shofarot"* are recited only during the Musaf prayer, the concept of *"Malchuyot"* repeats throughout every prayer of Rosh Hashanah: *"Meloch Al Kol HaOlam Kulo Bichvodecha"* (Reign over the whole world in Your glory), *"Melech Al Kol Haarets"* (King over all the earth), and so on. Even the conclusion of the *kiddush* on Rosh Hashanah is related to this aspect. This emphasizes that the idea of kingship is the main aspect of Rosh Hashanah.

This meaning is also reflected in the writings of the Arizal, who described Rosh Hashanah as "The construction of the Kingdom." Chassidic teachings further elucidate that the spiritual service of Rosh Hashanah is to "rebuild" (i.e., renew) Hashem's Kingship over the world. Thus, the matters mentioned above underscore the significance of Rosh Hashanah, where we crown Hashem and willingly accept His kingship over us and the entire world...[2]

Nonetheless, these profound matters still require further elaboration...

Renew The Kingdom

In the year 2488 from the creation of the world, Moshe Rabbeinu passed away, and the leadership of Yehoshua bin Nun commenced. His leadership lasted for twenty-eight years.

Following Yehoshua's passing at the age of 110, the mantle of

2. Chassidut Mevoeret (Torah Ohr V'Likutei Torah – Moadim I, p. 36)

leadership was passed on to the "elders" of that generation. After their time, the era of the Judges began, spanning approximately 350 years until the anointment of Shaul as the first King of Israel, marking the dawn of the period of Kings.

The final Judge was the esteemed prophet, Shmuel, and in his book, the account of Shaul's anointing as the first King of Israel is recounted:

Shmuel HaNavi grew old and was approached by Am Israel who said, "Throughout the past centuries, we have had righteous leaders (judges) who guided us. We are fed up! We want a king!"

"All the elders of Israel then gathered together and they came to Shmuel, to Ramah. They said to him: You are old... now appoint a king to judge us, like all the nations" (Shmuel I 8:4-5).

Prophecy rested upon Shmuel HaNavi. Hashem revealed Himself to Shmuel and said, "I have heard their request, and I will fulfill their desire. Go, anoint Shaul ben Kish, as king."

"There was a man from the tribe of Binyamin, his name was Kish... a mighty man of valor. And he had a son whose name was Shaul, a young and handsome man. There was none among Bnei Israel a better-looking person than he, from his shoulders upward, he was taller than any of the people" (Shmuel I 9:1-2).

Shaul's height being greater than all the people is not merely a reference to his physical stature but also, and primarily, to his spiritual greatness.

Shaul's character was exalted above his peers. His virtues were of the highest order, surpassing even the greatest individuals of the generation. This spiritual elevation was also reflected in his physical height, symbolizing the greatness that emanated from his soul.

Shaul's inner world was one of love and compassion, illuminated by Torah and prayer,

and encompassed by sublime spiritual happiness revealed only to the "wealthy of spirit" of his kind. However, when he heard that they wanted to cast him out of his world and force him into leading the people, he vehemently resisted, "What did I do? What do you want from me? Go away!" he said. But Shmuel HaNavi, who understood the "map" of the human soul and knew all its paths and ways, realized that the only way to arouse Shaul's desire for kingship was through the people's self-nullification before him. Therefore, he instructed them to proclaim and accept his kingship, "And all the people shouted and said: Long live the king!" (Shmuel I 10:24).

The coronation ended, but a large group of Am Israel still refused to accept him... "But wicked men said: How will this person save us? And they ridiculed him" (Shmuel I 10:27).

And so, they were unable to arouse his desire for kingship, as it says, "And Shaul also went home" (Shmuel I 10:26). The Radak explains that he went home because he saw that he was not universally accepted and approved by all of Am Israel, thus he refrained from acting as a true king.

If such is the situation between a flesh-and-blood king and his people, how much more is this true between the King of Kings and His people?

Hashem desires that His kingship over the world comes from the people's free choice, not through coercion from above. Thus, He, as it were, doesn't inherently want to be King.

This is the essence of our *avodah* on Rosh Hashanah – to coronate Hashem as the King over the world. When we accept Him as our King, and accept His kingship and sovereignty willingly, we awaken, as it were, His desire for Kingship, and He once again becomes our King and the King of the world...[3]

3. B'Ohr HaChassidut (Year 1 – Issue 12, p. 6)

Crown Him King

Rabbi Shimshon David Pincus zt"l said the following:[4]

The central subject of Yamim Nora'im *is Malchus*, Hashem's Kingship. *Chazal* describe Rosh Hashanah as follows:

Recite before Me *Malchuyos*, so that you will make Me King over you.

This is the time when every person needs to make Hashem King over himself.

Malchus is emphasized in our prayers throughout *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* as well. We change the wording to *HaMelech HaKadosh, HaMelech HaMishpat*, etc. We emphasize in every place that Hashem is King over us.

Now, there usually are comparisons from our own world that we can use to help us understand what we are saying about Hashem. In theory, this is true with *Malchus* as well. *Chazal* say:

The earthly kingdom resembles the Heavenly Kingdom.

In previous generations, we indeed had an image of a human king. But in our generation we have difficulty picturing *Malchus*. Nowadays there is hardly a country in the world that has a king, and for this reason it is very hard for us to grasp what it means that Hashem is "King" over us.

How far we are from understanding what *Malchus* is can be seen from the following teaching of *Chazal* concerning who takes a *neder*. *Chazal* say that a vow can express the following idea:

I am not a dog, that I should benefit from you while you do not benefit from me.

This implies that the dog has the trait of only taking benefit without providing it. A dog takes and doesn't give. As opposed to

4. Moadei Hashanah (The Month of Elul and Rosh Hashanah, p. 215)

other domesticated animals, the dog gives us neither milk nor wool nor meat nor anything else of tangible value.

At the other extreme, a vow can express the following idea:

I am not a king, that I should give benefit to you, while you do not give benefit to me.

This implies that the king has the trait of giving benefit to others. A true king gives constantly and without limit. He does not hold anything back and he does not take for himself. This is the trait of *Malchus*.

Nowadays we have a hard time grasping what true *Malchus* is all about. This is the subject we will discuss: what is *Malchus*, what is the nature of a real king, and what do we mean when we say that Hashem is "King" over us ?

The first thing we need to know is that a king's traits — whether he is wise and mighty or the opposite — cannot be discerned by looking at his face. The only way we can know these things is by looking at the way he runs his kingdom.

If in his country, everyone pays full taxes and can't get out of it, then it is evident that the king has a powerful and forceful character. If the public services are in poor shape, this shows us that the king is not wise and mighty, neither is he rich and generous. *Malchus* expresses itself mainly in how the king runs the country.

There is more we need to know about the concept of "king." *Chazal* tell us:

The king among wild animals is the lion. The king among domesticated animals is the ox. The king among fowl is the eagle.

Now, we don't have trouble understanding why the lion is king of the wild animals. We picture the lion as big and strong. One roar of the lion is enough to chase all the animals away. The lion is so powerful that even when another animal seizes prey, the lion takes his portion first.

But why is the ox the king of the domesticated animals ? Does

the ox "reign" over the other farm stock? It seems to me that this is where we come to a deeper understanding of *Malchus*:

Everything in the world has its special characteristic. When this characteristic reaches full expression, this is what is meant by "*Malchus.*"

Let's take a table, for example. The purpose of a table is that a person should be able to put things on it, because it is hard to hold everything in one's hands all the time. However, when a person wants to have a cover over his head to protect him from rain or sun, this is not what a table is for. For this, one builds a tent. So it is with every object in the world. It has its own special purpose for which it was made, to which it is uniquely designated.

"The king among the domesticated animals is the ox." An animal that is domesticated has a certain characteristic. And the animal that is most domesticated, that lacks all wild qualities, is the ox. It is the ultimate domesticated animal.

Other livestock are not like the ox. The goat, for instance, does not have completely domesticated traits. Indeed, it provides milk like a domesticated animal, but on the other hand it jumps like a wild animal. The prototype of "domesticated animal" is the ox. Thus, the ox is the "king" of the domesticated animals.

Now let us speak of man. A human being possesses many faculties. He sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, etc. However, all his limbs and organs are arranged around the heart in the center of the body, which is the abode of life. The central characteristic of man is life.

The purpose of hunger, for instance, is to bring a person to eat, for if he fails to eat for too long, his life comes to an end. Satiety signifies an extension of life. So it is with the body's other faculties as well. Man's main characteristic is life; thus the heart, the center of life, is considered the "king" of the body's members, as stated in Torah sources.

Let us consider what an ordinary person does with his life.

Every ordinary person in every place, if he would be asked, "Where are you?" his answer will essentially be, "I am in the world." And if he is asked, "What are you doing in the world?" his answer will be, "I am living!" A person's central focus is life itself. The greatest pleasure in the world does not even come close to the intense pleasure of just being alive.

Most of the time we don't sense this pleasure, but there are situations that bring it to the fore. Let's say someone is in the doctor's office, waiting to hear his prognosis. The doctor is staring at the x-rays and looks awfully serious. He doesn't speak a word. Then he starts slowly and says, "I am sorry to say this, Mr. Schwartz, but I must tell you that according to the x-rays, you have about two weeks to live." Mr. Schwartz is destroyed. He can hardly drag his feet home, and even when he gets there, he walks around in total confusion and doesn't know what to do with himself. "Did something happen? You don't feel well?" he is asked, and he answers, "I am going to die!!"

Suddenly the telephone rings. It is the secretary from the doctor's office. She tells him excitedly, "The doctor is so sorry, he asked me to call you right away. You see, it was all a mistake. Those weren't your x-rays at all. They were somebody else's. You are in fine health!"

There is no way to describe the wondrous joy that Mr. Schwartz feels at this moment. It is a pleasure unparalleled by anything in the entire world. It is the joy over life itself.

When a Jew declares that Hashem is King over him, this means that if he would be asked, "For what did you come to this world? What is the purpose of your life?" he will answer, "I am not here just to live. Life in this world eventually comes to an end. Rather, I am here in order to connect to Hashem, and this is the main characteristic of my life."

How do we connect to Hashem?

The Rambam wrote:

There is nothing that lasts forever and ever, except for knowledge of the Rock of the World.

On a deeper level, Hashem's *Malchus* in our world means that the reality of Hashem becomes the central characteristic in our life.

Since making Hashem King over us is the central characteristic of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, let us devote a little thought to the practical side of things. How does one put the main focus of life on knowledge of Hashem?

We can learn from the story of Adam HaRishon. Adam HaRishon was tremendously wise, for it says:

Adam *called names to all the domesticated animals and to all the birds of the sky and to all the animals of the field.*

He fully understood the traits of all the creatures, even more than the angels did. As a result, he knew how to call each creature by its appropriate name. The Midrash tells us:

Said R. Acha: When HaKadosh Baruch Hu was about to create man, he consulted with the ministering angels. He said to them, "Shall we make man?" They asked Him, "What is the nature of this man?" He answered them, "His wisdom is greater than yours."

HaKadosh Baruch Hu brought before them the domesticated animals and the wild animals and the fowl, and said to them, "What is its name?" They did not know. He brought them before Adam, and said to him, "What is its name?" Adam answered, "This is an ox, this is a donkey, this is a horse and this is a camel."

HaKadosh Baruch Hu asked, "And you, what is your name?" Adam answered, "It is fitting for me to be called 'Adam,' for I was created from the ground (*adamah*)."

HaKadosh Baruch Hu asked, "And Me, what is My Name?" Adam answered, "It is fitting for You to be called *Adonai*, for You are the Master (*Adon*) over all Your creatures."

Said R. Chiya: It is written, *"I am Adonai; it is My Name* — it is My Name that Adam HaRishon called Me."

Early Torah sources explain that the Name *Adonai* signifies *Malchus*. It expresses: You are my King, the center of my life. And I am Your servant.

On the day of Adam's creation, which was Rosh Hashanah, Adam made Hashem King over himself, and called Him *Adonai*.

Chazal say that the servant of a king is like a king. This means that a servant has no plans of his own; whatever the king tells him, he does. Besides this, he eats only what the king eats, etc. Everything in his life revolves around the king. In this sense, he is like the king.

Hashem said to Adam HaRishon: "Since you called Me *Adonai*, and became My servant, from now on I am the central focus of your life. You must therefore do only what I tell you." Here, Hashem commanded him not to eat from the *Eitz HaDa'as*.

What is *da'as*, and why shouldn't Adam partake of it? What is wrong with *da'as*?

Da'as signifies the desire to know what is going on, to expand one's horizons, to know about everything that is happening in the world at large (hearing the news, reading newspapers, etc.). It means not being restricted to the confines of the Gemara and the Mishnayos, endless expanses... this is *Eitz HaDa'as*.

However, *da'as* is not what interests the King. So to speak, Hashem is interested in only one thing:

From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, HaKadosh Baruch Hu has in His world nothing but the four *amos* of the halachah.

When Moshe ascended to heaven, he heard the voice of

HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who was sitting and occupying Himself with the Torah passage of *parah adumah*, and was saying the halachah in the name of the Sage who stated it.

The King is not interested in what the *Eitz HaDa'as* has to offer; He does not find its fruit to be "tasty," so to speak. Adam was thus forbidden to partake of *Eitz HaDa'as*, as Hashem is his King. Hashem is the central focus of his life. For Adam HaRishon, the fruit of this tree was forbidden more severely than pork is for an ordinary Jew. Eating pork is punishable by lashes, while Adam was warned that eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as* is punishable by death:

On *the day you eat from it, you shall surely die.*

Now, Adam HaRishon had no end of trees to eat from. But the only thing that interested him was the *Eitz HaDa'as*. Within a short period of time, he partook of its fruit.

The story continues as follows:

They *heard the voice of Hashem, God walking about in the Garden toward the west.*

Hashem was walking about in Gan Eden. What does this signify? Hashem was presenting Himself to Adam HaRishon, so Adam could come forward and do *teshuvah*.

The Gemara recounts:

When R. Zeira had an issue with someone [i.e., someone had wronged him], he would pass back and forth before him and present himself to him, so that the person could come and appease him.

R. Yitzchak Blazer asks: Where did R. Zeira learn this gracious practice from? What is the source for it? He answers:

It seems that the foundation of this gracious practice is from the ways of Hashem's traits. This is how Hashem graciously conducts Himself with the Jewish people... When Hashem is not present, the *avodah* of *teshuvah* is harder...

And since Hashem knows that we have constant evil desire, and on top of this, man's laziness is very great... Therefore, on these days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, which is before the day when *teshuvah* is essential for a person, Hashem conducts Himself graciously and presents Himself — so that He should be present and close to a person, and the *teshuvah* can be accepted immediately.

This was how Hashem conducted Himself with Adam:

They *heard the voice of Hashem, God walking about in the Garden toward the west... and He said to him, "Where are you ?"*

So to speak, Hashem went looking for Adam and said to him, *"Where are you ?"* so that Adam would have the opportunity to do *teshuvah*.

This is the simple explanation. But on a deeper level, Hashem said to him, *"Where are you ?"* — What position are you taking ? Are you with Me or not ? You said to Me before that I am your King. If so, why did you run away from Me ?

Adam HaRishon's answer was:

I *heard Your voice in the Garden and I was afraid, for lam naked. So I hid."*

Translated into our language, Adam was saying like this: Hashem, I heard that You were looking for me, but I am afraid of You, *"for I am naked."* In other words, I am no more than an ordinary person. I was just born today, and I don't want to be with You all the time. It is too much for me ! *"So I hid"* — there are moments when I wish to hide from You. I will meet You in shul for *Shacharis* (or I will meet you in the *beis midrash*), but until then, let me live my life, give me a little private space for myself. I don't want to overdo it in either direction.

In other words, Adam HaRishon was willing to try at certain times to fulfill the will of his Creator, but not in a way that Hashem would be King over him, i.e., that his entire life would revolve around Hashem alone.

Rosh Hashanah - Crown Him King

I knew a certain Jew who would occasionally watch videos. I said to him, "They say about the Chafetz Chaim that once he was traveling by horse and wagon, and the driver suddenly stopped the horses, went into an orchard next to the road and began to pick some fruit, as he thought no one was watching him. To his surprise he heard the Chafetz Chaim yelling to him, 'They see you!'

"Upon hearing this, the driver hurried back to the wagon and sped away. Afterward, when they were on the open road, he asked the Chafetz Chaim, 'Who was it that saw me?' The Chafetz Chaim answered, 'The *Ribono shel Olam*!'

"In the same way," I said to the video watcher, "you should know that when you are looking at the screen, Hashem is sitting next to you and seeing everything you do!"

There is an awesome question that echoes through all the worlds: *"Where are you?"* — Are you with Me? If Adam HaRishon would have answered, "Hashem, I am together with You. Wherever You are, I am there too," at that moment he would have seen the fulfillment of:

In the place where *ba'alei teshuvah* stand, even *tzaddikim gemurim* do not stand."

His sin would have been atoned and he would have merited living forever. But he did not respond like this. Instead he said, *"So I hid."* In other words: At davening times I am together with You. But there are moments when I hide from You.

At this time of year we need to fulfill the command of *"Make Me King over you."* We need to relate to Hashem as the focal point of our life, around which everything revolves. But unfortunately, some people have the *yetzer hara* as their true king and center of their lives.

Chazal say:

What is the meaning of *"A small city and the people in it are few..."*? *"A small city"* — this is the body. *"And the people in it*

are few" — these are the body's limbs and organs. *"And a great king came against it and surrounded it"* — this is the *yetzer hara*. *"And he built against it traps and snares"* — these are sins. *"And he found in it a poor but wise man"* — this is the *yetzer tov*. *"And he rescued the whole city in his wisdom"* — this is *teshuvah* and good deeds.

Here we see that also the *yetzer hara* is called a "king."

The *yetzer hara* is the "I" that is always saying: "I want this," "I want that," "I am hungry," "I am thirsty," etc. It is the focal point around which many people's lives revolve.

When a person doesn't relate to Hashem as a Personality Who is involved in the whole course of his life, this is a contradiction to the entire concept of *Malchus*.

We find countless places in Torah where our relationship with Hashem is compared to marriage, to the relationship between man and wife. (This is actually the whole theme of *Shir HaShirim*, and there are other places as well where this theme is found.)

"Marriage" means sharing life in one home. At Har Sinai we made a covenant with Hashem that from now on, we would be together with Him — not like two friends, and not even like two brothers, but rather like a man and wife who share a common home and common interests. Even though it sometimes happens that there is a fight in the home, in the end the couple makes up, because *"Love covers over all sins."*

"Love" means a shared life. It means living together with HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

In the verses speaking of the *korbanos* of Rosh Hashanah, it says, *"You shall make yourselves a burnt offering."* As we know, the burnt offering is entirely placed on the Altar and burned up to Hashem. On Rosh Hashanah, the mitzvah incumbent upon every Jew is *"You shall make yourselves a burnt offering."* To offer oneself up for the sake of Hashem. This is *mesirus nefesh*.

Mesirus *nefesh* is relevant to the rest of the year, too. Every day, when accepting upon himself the yoke of Heaven's Kingship by reciting the first *pasuk* of the Shema, every Jew needs to think that Hashem is "One," and we all revolve around Him. This thought is an expression of *mesirus nefesh*.

On Rosh Hashanah, however, it is a *mesirus nefesh* of a different type: *Malchus*. It differs qualitatively from the *mesirus nefesh* of the rest of the year.

The word *nefesh* bears two meanings: it means "life," and it also refers to a person's will, his desire. This we see from the fact that Avraham Avinu addressed *B'nei Ches* by saying: "*If you are willing* (nafshechem) to bury my dead from before me..."

During the rest of the year, *mesirus nefesh* is a matter of offering up one's life. But on Rosh Hashanah it is a matter of offering up one's will to Hashem.

The following example brings out the point.

A *kollel* man comes to the dentist's office for his appointment, and since he knows it might be a long wait, he brings along a Gemara so he can learn in the meantime. While he is sitting there he sees in front of him a stack of newspapers and "kosher" magazines that catch his interest. He really wants to pick one up and read it. Maybe just this issue has an article with some great idea that can help with *parnassah*...

In short, his *nefesh* — his inner will and desire — is set on reading an entertaining article right now.

He is already raising his arm to reach out and pick up the interesting reading material, and suddenly he senses Hashem saying to him: "No ! Don't look in anything but the Gemara !"

"But Hashem, I want to read the newspaper..."

"No !"

A conflict develops.

In the end, he "gives in." He says: "Hashem, I fear You. You are

Master over all. I have little children, and in one moment when a child is crossing the street, a tragedy could take place, *chas v'shalom*. Or something else could happen. I am willing to give up on what I want and do what You say. I won't look at newspapers and magazines. I will only learn Gemara."

This is *mesirus nefesh*. But it is not the *mesirus nefesh* of *Malchus* because it reflects the following stance: There is me, and there is Hashem. He says like this while I say like that. Since I don't have much choice, since I am worried about what might happen, I therefore give in to Him.

If this is the way I look at it then I have not really come to terms with *Malchus*. What is happening here is actually a battle between two "kings." Put bluntly, the stance I am taking is like this: I am king over myself, and He is King over the world. Since He is stronger than I am, since He can *chas v'shalom* bring upon me sickness, or can make sure all my business dealings will go wrong, I don't want to antagonize Him.

The *mesirus nefesh* of *Malchus* is something else. It is along the lines of "the servant of a king is like a king." When Hashem commands me to learn Gemara, then what is written there is like honey to me, whereas the newspaper is like garbage, and who wants to eat garbage? Is garbage "interesting"? Right now I might not sense so strongly that the reality is like this, but I will try to get there, because Hashem is the central point in my life, around which everything else revolves.

This is *Malchus*.

Our *avodah* on Rosh Hashanah is to make Hashem King over us, and if we don't do this, we haven't done very much. This is also the meaning of the *teshuvah* of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and of Yom Kippur. It is all *Malchus*. In other words, if Hashem will ask each one of us "*Where are you ?*" we will answer differently than Adam HaRishon did.

True, Adam HaRishon did *teshuvah* in the end, but his initial response was: *"So I hid."* In contrast to him, we will immediately answer, "We are together with You, Hashem. We live our whole life with You. This is our whole world."

How does a person truly make Hashem King over himself?

The answer is that he can't; it is impossible. Hashem does it for us.

We can't do it on our own. If a person got used to being his own king over the course of many years, if his wills and desires are at the center of his life, then he can't change himself. He needs a completely new life.

This is the gift that Hashem gives us each year on Rosh Hashanah. The Gemara teaches us:

He who sees his friend after twelve months [during which he did not see him,] recites "Blessed is He Who revives the dead."

The Maharsha explains as follows:

Because each year, a person is judged on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur if he will die or stay alive. So if a person sees his friend after this Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and afterward doesn't see him until after the next Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, his friend went through a judgment whether to die or not. Therefore he recites "Blessed is He Who revives the dead," because his friend was saved from a judgment of death on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur."

Before Rosh Hashanah, we recite *selichos*. (The Sefaradim start from Rosh Chodesh Elul, and the Ashkenazim from the week before Rosh Hashanah). Why? Because Erev Rosh Hashanah is like a day of death. On this day, life comes to an end, so to speak, and the next day, on Rosh Hashanah, we merit receiving new life from Hashem: "This day is the beginning of Your deeds; a remembrance of the first day." When someone is facing the last day of his life, he does *teshuvah*. Erev Rosh Hashanah is the last day of life, and tomorrow, a new life begins.

Why does Hashem bring life to an end and then grant new life? Because on Rosh Hashanah, the *avodah* is to accept upon ourselves the yoke of Hashem's Kingship. This means we need to change the very focus of our life, and this is something a person cannot do on his own. Hashem has to create a person for this. This is the miracle of Rosh Hashanah and *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*: Hashem creates us anew, and becomes King over us.

This is what Hashem does. But we, too, must do something. There are actually two *avodos* incumbent on us: First, to accept Hashem as the King — to want to change in a way that Hashem will become the center of our life. We just need to start, and Hashem will complete the work for us.

It is written:

***I** will call to the God over all; to God Who finishes for me.*

So to speak, Hashem finishes the job.

The second thing incumbent on us is to have *emunah.* To believe that on Rosh Hashanah and *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* we go through a deep and qualitative change. Even if we don't tangibly perceive the change, we should know that in his inner will, a Jew meets Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and his *neshamah* is renewed by Him. We need to believe this really and truly.

The following allegory brings out the point.

Scientifically speaking, how is a man put on the moon? It seems as if a spaceship journeying to the moon would need an impossibly large fuel tank, in order to traverse the vast distance from Earth. If so, how does it work?

The secret is that the power of gravity, which holds sway over objects and pulls them down to earth, extends up only to a certain number of miles. A spaceship on its way to the moon blasts off with a very powerful thrust that propels it up and beyond the atmosphere, to a height where gravity no longer pulls it down to Earth. From there on, it continues

to glide forward on its own, until it gets to the moon.

"I *will call to the God over all; to God Who finishes for me."* After a Jew uproots himself from his physical wills and desires that pull him down toward materialism and lowliness, Hashem uplifts him and raises him to heights that he didn't even think of.

This is the power of *Malchus*: "So that you will make Me King over you"!

King vs. Ruler

There's a specific distinction between a king and a ruler. Someone who governs over a country, leading and acting as he pleases without any restrictions, is not called a "king" but a "ruler."

What's the difference between a ruler and a king?

A ruler is one who enters a country and exercises authority over its citizens without their consent. They have no say in opposing his will. If anyone attempts to change anything from his commands, he will use the power and strength he possesses to suppress any rebellion or disloyalty, even from the weakest among them, immediately![5]

On the other hand, what is a king?

Wellsprings of Wisdom

5. An example of this: It's known that during Stalin's rule in Russia, people were afraid to even utter a single word against the government, as any such action could lead to severe consequences.

Now, imagine someone living in such a country being asked, "Would you dare to do anything against the government?"

"Heaven forbid, I'm not crazy," they would respond.

"And if you did speak or act against the government, how would you feel?"

"I would be filled with tremendous fear! I would worry that at any moment, the police would come with evidence against me."

"And what do you think about the ruler himself?"

"Quiet, it's forbidden to talk about him."

Rosh Hashanah - King vs. Ruler

The Torah commands us to appoint a king, as it says, "You shall surely set a king over you" (Devarim 17:15).

The Rambam,[6] after explaining the laws of honoring the king with great respect, such as not riding on his horse or sitting on his throne, not using his scepter, not wearing his crown, or any of his royal garments, writes:[7]

"The same way the Torah attributed great honor to him and obligated everyone to honor him, so too, it commanded him to be lowly and humble... He should be compassionate and merciful to young and old alike, involving himself in their good and welfare, and care for the honor of the least among them.[8] When addressing the entire community, he should speak gently and softly..."

Wellsprings of Wisdom

Back to our topic: If someone only regarded Hashem as a Ruler and, when confronted with various disasters and hardships, were asked, "Look at all these troubles and suffering in the world, etc." they would answer, "Quiet, it's forbidden to speak against Hashem."

Would that be an appropriate approach ?

Certainly not ! We must believe that Hashem directs His world according to His will, and we must believe that His will is for the ultimate good of the Jewish people !

There is a story about the Chafetz Chaim who once heard a Jew ask his friend, "How are things ?" and the friend replied, "It wouldn't have been bad if it were a little better."

The Chafetz Chaim turned to the Jew and said, "Who told you it wouldn't have been worse if it were a little different ? !"

He then added, "And I can tell you, if it were indeed 'better if it were a little different,' Hashem would have made it so. And if, nevertheless, He made it this way, it's a sign that there cannot be anything better than this !"

All of this falls within the realm of "rule" – "So that all should know that You created it; and every being should understand that You formed it, and all that has breath in its nose shall say: Hashem, G-d of Israel, is King, and His Kingship rules over all."

However, this is not the complete "Kingship."

6. Mishne Torah (Hilchot Melachim 2:1)

7. Mishne Torah (Hilchot Melachim 2:6)

8. In a lecture delivered by Rabbi Shalom Meir Wallach, he said the following (Maayan HaMoed – Bein HaMetzarim, p. 131):

Rosh Hashanah - King vs. Ruler

"I'll share a story from a reliable source, even though the name of the person is concealed because I didn't seek permission to reveal it.

The intensity of studies in yeshiva is quite well-known. The *bachurim* are full of vigor, and the winter is long. In the month of Adar, they 'smell' '*Bein HaZmanim*' and the joy of Purim is awaited with pleasant anticipation. When Adar arrives, we increase in joy, and in the yeshivas, they follow closely after signs of laxity and negligence. And as Iyov said, "What I dread, has come upon me."

When the study session is at its peak, a firecracker blows up, and smoke fills the room, a sign of throwing off the burden... In a swift move, the Rosh Yeshiva identifies the source of the smoke and points at the *bachur*, 'Come to me after prayer.' Immediately, tense silence prevails, the *bachur's* face turns pale and his friends bury their heads in their books. Shortly thereafter, the sound of studying resumed at its full volume.

The prayer concluded. The *bachur* stood anxiously and apprehensively before the Rosh Yeshiva.

'Come with me,' he says.

They go out, and as they walk down the street, the Rosh Yeshiva starts to reminisce. How he appointed Rabbi Shach zt"l, and established the yeshiva. He talks about the difficulties at the beginning and the struggle to establish the world of yeshivas. He describes how he recruited the yeshiva's staff, how he managed to acquire the beloved supervisor. He speaks about the responsibility of accepting students, the responsibility of guidance and supervision. The efforts to place the graduates in the best yeshivas, to tailor each student's path, and the vision that is evident in the establishment of Torah institutions. The enormous financial burden involved in maintaining a yeshiva. Rent, food, and securing salaries. In short, a life's work, consuming all of one's time, mind, and heart. If discipline collapses, if the dedication to learning falters, the yeshiva will lose its good name. The top yeshivas won't accept its graduates, and the best students won't seek to enter its doors.

The Rosh yeshiva stops, looks into the eyes of his student, and says, 'I really like you. I recognize your talents. Your future is promising. However, you are being cautioned. I respect your parents. But I won't let you destroy the yeshiva – and that's what you did today.'

The *bachur* lowers his eyes.

'Your yetzer hara got the best of you. You didn't know where things could lead, isn't that right?'

The *bachur* nods.

"So, there are no punishments unless warned. One more time, one more deviation, and you'll be out without excuses. And I won't be able to take you back. Do you understand?"

The *bachur* nods.

'So here we are, standing at the entrance to a bookstore. Go inside and choose any book you want, on me.'

A true story."

He should always act with excessive humility and bear their burdens, complaints, and anger just like a nurse carries a baby... "He shall pasture His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom" (Yeshayahu 40:11).

A "ruler" does what he pleases without regard for the people, but a "king" has a relationship with the people. The king is "the heart of Israel," chosen to unite and lead them. All his thoughts are constantly focused on the needs of the people.

A king is one who takes upon himself the burden of the people's welfare...

A parable illustrates this: A king enters a kingdom and asks the people, "Shall I reign over you?" They reply, "Have you done any good for us that we should accept your rule?" The king then builds walls for them, provides water, and fights battles on their behalf. Again he asks, "Shall I reign over you?" and they respond, "Yes."[9] Once the king willingly took upon himself the burden of leading the kingdom and fulfilled all the needs of his subjects, the people agreed to accept him as their king.

Hashem created all of creation solely to bestow goodness upon us, "a world built on kindness."

When Klal Israel was chosen to be Hashem's people, it was done in the following manner: "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me" (Shemot 19:4).

The King of kings takes us – His people – to Himself, and He is concerned for our utmost benefit in the world. With this care, He sustains the entire world for us and gives us His Torah, which is the greatest good He bestowed upon us in our world.

Because all the conduct that Hashem employs with the Jewish people stems only from His boundless love and great

9. Yalkut Shimoni (Shemot – Remez 207)

compassion, the Jews willingly accept His kingship. "And His kingship they willingly accepted upon themselves," meaning the Jews willingly accept His kingship forever and desire that He remain their King forever.

"Say before Me *Malchuyot* in order that you may accept Me as your King" – meaning, that we should stand and say, "Master of the world! You are not merely a Ruler. All the conduct of the world and all of creation is solely for the purpose of truly benefiting us. For this reason, You commanded us to follow Your Torah and mitzvot."

"Accept Me as your king" – meaning, recognize My Kingship and wholeheartedly accept upon yourselves to fulfill My will with love and joy![10]

Shabbat Shalom!

10. S'de Avraham (Moadei Hashem, p. 72)

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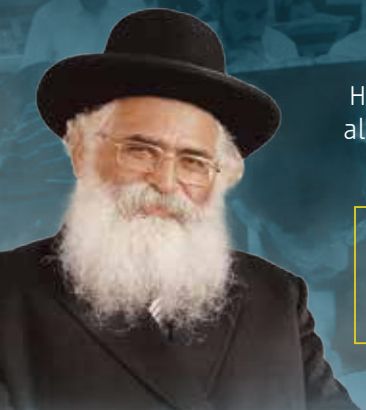

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Rosh hashanah
1st of Tishrei, 5784

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	6:45 pm	7:44 pm	8:16 pm
Miami	7:05 pm	7:58 pm	8:36 pm
Los Angeles	6:41 pm	7:35 pm	8:11 pm
Montreal	6:36 pm	7:47 pm	8:16 pm
Toronto	7:00 pm	8:09 pm	8:41 pm
London	6:47 pm	8:03 pm	8:26 pm
Jerusalem	6:30 pm	7:19 pm	8:04 pm
Tel Aviv	6:00 pm	7:16 pm	8:21 pm
Haifa	5:59 pm	7:15 pm	8:21 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:59 pm	7:15 pm	8:20 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

The Torah is like food. A person who eats good food feels good afterward, but a person who eats spoiled food will suffer from stomach pains, and so on.

Similarly, regarding the Torah, when a person knows what to study and from whom to learn, and goes to hear words of Torah from a wise, righteous, and G-d fearing rabbi, who learns Torah solely for the sake of heaven, such a person not only remains spiritually healthy but also undergoes positive transformations in all aspects of their life. Moreover, there is an added benefit that all their children will walk in the path of Hashem, which is the true success in life.

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