

# תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

SEFER DEVARIM - THE PENSON FAMILY EDITION

IN MEMORY OF MENDEL BEN MENDEL A"H

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# ראש השנה

WITH

# R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

## Kingdom and Glory

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## Part I. Seeing His Kingdom

### Foundation of The Day

When we come to study the great day of Rosh Hashanah, we take note of what is written in the sefer *Yesod V'shoresh Ha'avodah*: "Achai v'rayai," he says, "My brothers, my friends; you know that in the tefillos of the Yamim Nora'im, the chief theme is *kevod Shamayim*." יהוה יתמלך אתה השם לבדך על כל מעשׂיך — "You, Hashem, should reign alone over all of Your works." That's the prayer of the day; the crux of the *avodas hayom* on Rosh Hashanah is proclaiming Hashem Melech — Hashem is the King.

Now, the truth is that the Torah doesn't explain to us very much about this important day. All it says about Rosh Hashanah is: יום תרועה לכם יהיה — It should be a day of *teruah* for you (*Bamidbar* 29:1). But

what this *teruah* is all about we don't really know – the Torah doesn't tell us anything. However, even though it might not be so evident in the words of the Torah what the *shofar* is meant to teach us or even what Rosh Hashanah is about altogether, when you look in the *seder hatefillah* you see that Rosh Hashanah is all about *malchiyos*; everything revolves around Hashem's kingship. There are other aspects too, but even the *zichronos* and *shofros* are connected to the first element, the element of Hashem Melech.

Hashem is King – that's the foundation of the day; actually it seems to be all that we speak about. Whatever *tefillos* we say on Rosh Hashanah – and we say many – we're always mentioning His *malchus*. And not only mentioning it – we're *begging* for Him to reign over us: מְלוֹךְ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ בְּבוֹדָךְ – Hashem; Please reign over all the world in Your glory.

### A Different Type of King

Now, to our ears such a request seems to be very superfluous. All day long we're standing on our feet imploring, "Hashem should reign forever!" We're falling on our faces and we're begging Him, we're entreating Him with tears, "Please, Hashem, reign over the world."

Now, isn't that silly? Hakodosh Boruch Hu, after all, is not like a *melech basar v'dam*! A human king is a ruler only if he has subjects. When one of the chief barons approaches a fellow baron in the name of all of the nobility and he bestows upon him a belt of royalty and a scepter and says, "We are your subjects! Rule over us!" so he becomes the king. He has subjects upon whom he can rule now, so he's a king. And if he doesn't have a group of people that say he's the king, then he's not a king. Could be he'll imagine himself king, but actually he's nothing.

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not that type of king. He needs our recognition like I need a hole in my shoe. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not interested in the acclaim of humanity. As mentioned a number of times here, all of humanity to Hakodosh Boruch Hu is no more than all the bacteria in this rug right here. If all the millions of bacteria in

this rug would all come together and applaud one of us sitting here, that man wouldn't be affected at all. It wouldn't mean a thing to him.

### **Understanding Our Prayer**

And that's about as much as Hashem needs the acclaim of humanity; He doesn't need anyone to proclaim Him king because He's essentially the Melech; He's intrinsically King. That's what Dovid Hamelech said: הַשֵּׁם מְלֶכֶךְ גָּאוֹת לְבָשׁ – Hashem reigned, He is clothed in majesty. But it's not the majesty that others put on him; לְבַשׁ הַשֵּׁם עוֹ – Hakodosh Boruch Hu is clothed with a strength, הַתְּאָזֵר, that He girded Himself (Tehillim 93:1). הַתְּאָזֵר is a reflexive verb. It means “He girded Himself.” Nobody put a crown on His head. Nobody gave Him a royal belt and made Him great. He doesn't need anyone else to make Him King because He was always king; even before Creation. And He'll always be king no matter what! הַשֵּׁם מְלֶכֶךְ עוֹלָם וָעֶד – He's the king forever, אָבְרוּ גוֹיִם מְאָרְצוּ – and even if all the nations would disappear from His world, He's still the King (Tehillim 10:16).

And so, it's a big question: What's this Rosh Hashanah business all about? We have to give Him a *mi shebeirach* that He should be a king forever?! Why are we asking Him to reign over the world?! Of course, we're happy to say it. We'll read the words from the *machzor*; why not – it doesn't cost us any money. But just to say words and not understand them is a pity, a great pity. What are we doing on Rosh Hashanah all day long?

### **Goodness and Glory**

And so, we'll explain this by means of an important principle. We say in our *tefillah* (Yotzer - Shachris) טוֹב יֵצֵר כְּבוֹד לְשֵׁמוֹ – the Good One created all this glory for His name. Hashem is called the Good One, and it says here that He created all of this glory for His name. All of the kindness and wisdom we see in this world, the Good One created in order to glorify Himself.

The question is, if He created everything for the glory of His name, how is that a sign that He's the good one? If a person does something good not for the sake of being recognized but just for

somebody else's benefit, *that's* when you can say he's a good one. But if he performs deeds of kindness and his motive is only to be recognized you wouldn't call him "The Good One."

And yet, that's what it says there: טוב יצַר, *the Good One* – that's Hashem – *created everything, כְּבוֹד לְשִׁמּוֹ, for the purpose of bringing glory to His name.* It's a contradiction. If He did this because He is good, if He made this universe because He is kind and benevolent, then He didn't do it to glorify His name.

### ***The Greatest Accomplishment***

The answer is that there is no paradox; both principles are true. And that's because the greatest good that can be bestowed on anybody, the greatest benevolence that can be bestowed on any man, is if you make him aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The greatest achievement you could make in this world is to recognize that Hashem is the King – that He is everything to us!

And so we read the *possuk* like this: Because He's the Tov, therefore, *yatzar*. Because He's good and He wants to bestow good, that's why He created us – in order that we should have the opportunity to achieve the perfection of *kavod shemo*, of recognizing Him as king. That's our success in this world! The greatest accomplishment we could possibly achieve is making Hashem reign over us; it means understanding, recognizing, feeling, knowing implicitly that *Hashem Melech*, that Hashem reigns over the world. That's the greatest perfection of man in this world! The more you are aware, the more you feel that you're standing in the presence of the King, the more perfection you have acquired. There's nothing higher in life. רֵאשִׁית חֵכְמָה יִרְאֵת הַשֵּׁם – *The greatest and the highest of wisdom is for a man to feel the presence of Hashem.*

That's why He made you and that's why He made the world. And that's why the Good One is bestowing good things upon us all the time. It's the reason you ate breakfast today and it's the reason why you'll eat supper too – so that you should become more aware of *Hashem Melech*. That's why you have eyes and feet and a liver. That's why it rains and that's why there's a sun in the sky. Everything is

being given to us so that we should have more opportunities to recognize the King who's giving it to us. He is bestowing millions of benefits on mankind; all kinds of good things we're enjoying and all of them have one common purpose – כְּבוֹד לְשֵׁמוֹ, to bring us to recognize the Creator.

We must get that into our heads. The fundamental purpose of all the things in the world is to demonstrate that Somebody made them. That's the foundation for understanding all of reality. Whatever you see in this world has the purpose of making you aware of the Creator. All day long, wherever you turn, whatever you see, it should be reminding you that Hashem Melech – that He's the One who made that.

### **The World is a Distraction**

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

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

### **Primordial Sunlight**

Now, I'll explain that a little more, a little more deeply. You remember when Hashem created the world, He said, “Yehi ohr – Let

there be light.” And there was light. “וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר – *And there was night and day.*” The earth turned toward the light and away from the light, and that’s how there was day and night. Now, where did that light come from? Did it come from the sun? No; there was no sun yet on the first day. So where did it come from? It had to be coming from somewhere if the earth’s revolution was causing day and night. So what was the source of this light?

And the answer is that it came *mei’ayin*, it came from nothing. It came from Hashem, *yesh mei’ayin*. Light is energy, you know. It came from Hashem’s energy. *Aleph-lamed, Eil*, means energy. Hashem said, “Let light start pouring out to this world,” and light poured forth. It was light streaming forth from a certain point but without a source because there was no sun yet! It was light emanating from nowhere.

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

### **The Darkness of the Sun**

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

But the truth is that *the sun darkens the world*. The sun constantly conceals the truth because now you look at the sun and you think *the sun* is the one that gives us the light. And that’s the great deception, the great *sheker*, of the sun. Because really the sun has no light. It’s

only Hakodosh Boruch Hu using the sun as a lantern. It's still His energy, only that now, instead of seeing energy coming from space without any cause except Hashem Himself, we're deceived into thinking it comes from the sun.

And what happens as a result? As a result, millions of people worshipped the sun instead of worshipping Hashem. And even we, *l'havdil*, don't worship the sun, but when we see the sun, *we think it's the sun that produces the light*. We know that the sun has thermonuclear processes. It's like an atom bomb exploding constantly, a hydrogen bomb exploding over and over again producing energy that comes down here in the form of light energy. We know all about it!

Oh no! We *think* we know, but it's all a deception. It's only an excuse not to see the truth. The real truth was before the sun. The real truth is that everything is only Hashem and everything else is concealing Him.

### **Revealing the Secret**

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

Oh no! Nothing doing! It's only a dream. It's imagination. Hashem is doing everything! *Hashem Melech!* Don't think Hashem stopped being involved; that He gave it over to nature and retired from business. He's there all the time! Only that instead of seeing Him openly, you're being deceived by what looks like nature.

And our job is to open up our eyes. The *malachim* – their eyes are open right now and they say **מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ** – *The world is filled with His glory*, because they see right now the truth. But we

don't; we're deceived by nature, and therefore we say, וְיִמְלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת בְּל הָאָרֶץ, *the time should come when His glory will fill the world*, and then everybody will see that Hashem is the One Who fills the world. We're always striving to become more and more aware that there's nothing else. אֵין עוֹד מִלְכֵדוּ - *There's nothing but Hashem. Hashem Melech*, and nothing else is anything.

## Part II. Accepting His Kingdom

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### Recognizing The Kingdom

And now we come back to Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is the opportunity to renew in our minds this important principle. Because every time you say, “Hashem Melech” on Rosh Hashanah, you're not merely repeating a *pizmon* from the *machzor* – you're declaring the *yesod hayesodos*!

Every “Hashem Melech” is a new opportunity to implant in your mind the conviction that Hakodosh Boruch Hu – Hashem, *Yud-Kay-Yav-Kay* – is the Wisdom of the world, He is the Kindness of the world, and בְּרַבֵּר הַשֵּׁם שְׁמַיִם נִעֲשׂוּ *the entire world is nothing but the word that came out of His mouth*. Actually, there is no world – the world is nothing but the *dvar Hashem*. And on Rosh Hashanah all we speak about is this most important fact in the world, the *yesod hayesodos*, that Hashem is the King and that there is no other force, no other power beside Him.

And so, when we say וְהִתְמַלְכָּה אִתְּךָ – *And You should reign*, we're not encouraging Hashem to be king; *we're encouraging ourselves to recognize that He's king!* We're asking that Hashem should reign *in the minds of men; in our minds*. We pray that *we* should recognize that there is one Designer for the universe, and that He has one design that stretches from the beginning of creation to the end of history. That's called *malchus*. That's a *Melech!* Everything is done with a plan; it's *altz g'cheshbont*. It's all arranged with a perfect *seder*

– and everything was made for this purpose, that Mankind should arrive at the understanding that Hashem is in charge.

### **Charity Begins at Home**

And so when we stand in shul tomorrow and we say **וְתִמְלֹךְ אֲתָהּ** **הַשֵּׁם לְבַדְּךָ עַל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ** – Hashem, You should reign alone on all of Your creations, realize that you yourself are the creation you're talking about. What we're actually saying is that *we* are most in need of this supplication. We're *davening* for ourselves – we're asking Hashem to give *us* success in understanding that *Hashem Melech*. We're not concerned about the Hottentots in the jungle that *they* should see that Hashem is king. If you'll stand on your feet all day on Rosh Hashanah saying **וְתִמְלֹךְ ... עַל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ** and you're thinking "Oh, Hashem! You should rule over everyone! Show Yourself and rule over the Hottentots and the Mexicans and the Scandinavians; all the *goyim* should recognize you" – if you're thinking that, you have it all wrong. No, that's not what Rosh Hashanah is about. Rosh Hashanah is all about you – it's about you recognizing that Hashem is the King in your life.

Now, of course we wouldn't begrudge the *goyim* if they also said *Hashem Melech*. We'd be happy if the Mohammedans and the *Notzrim* and the savages in the interior jungles of Central America would also be *mamlich Hashem Elokei Yisroel*. And one day they will, no question about it. But that's not our business right now – you have to be worried most about the interior of *yourself*. What about you?! Charity begins at home. The most important question is: Is He in charge of you? That's your biggest concern, yourself. *You* have to know that Hashem is King. That's the first and most important step of living successfully.

### **Yom Kippur Should Have Been First**

And now we can understand the answer to a big question that has bothered many people. Why is it that Yom Kippur comes *after* Rosh Hashanah? Rosh Hashanah is the *Yom Hadin*, the Day of Judgement. It's a great *sakanah*, Rosh Hashanah. It's a time when Hakodosh Boruch Hu inscribes us *l'chayim* or some other option.

Many people are *nichtav v'nechtam* on Rosh Hashanah – their fate is sealed on this day. But we're not ready to be judged yet! It's very frightening because we are going to be judged according to what we are, and we didn't do enough *teshuvah* yet. If on Rosh Hashanah, the *chovah* side, the side of accusation is heavier *chas v'shalom*, then you won't get a second chance.

So wouldn't it be worthwhile if instead of talking about *Hashem Melech* all day on Rosh Hashanah, we would spend the whole day saying, "Forgive us for this sin, and for that sin, and for this sin." At least you might get one sin off the scale! And as the side of *chovos* becomes lighter, the side of *zechuyos* becomes greater. So why don't we spend time on Rosh Hashanah saying **עַל הַחַטָּא שְׁחַטְּאֵנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ**? That seems to us the more sensible approach. In a time of danger, you have to throw overboard all the ballasts so the ship shouldn't sink. We have to throw overboard whatever sins we can and save ourselves. You could save your life on Rosh Hashanah by means of saying *al cheit!* So how can we "waste" time on Rosh Hashanah talking about *malchus Hashem*, saying "*Hashem Melech, Hashem Melech*" all day long, when we're in the greatest danger?

Maybe we should have Yom Kippur *before* Rosh Hashanah. We would say *viduy* and do *teshuvah* all day long, and have the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and then, when Rosh Hashanah finally comes, we're already cleansed of all our sins and we can get busy proclaiming *Hashem Melech*. That's how it should be – Yom Kippur should come before Rosh Hashanah! But no, we postpone *teshuva* until later, until after *Yom Hadin*, and instead of doing *teshuva* and saying **עַל הַחַטָּא** all day long, we're busy saying **וְתִמְלֹךְ אֱתָהּ הַשֵּׁם לְבָרְכֶךָ** – we're praying that You, Hashem, become our King. It's a big *kasha*.

### **The Highest Form of Teshuva**

And the answer is that of course you have to do *teshuva* on Rosh Hashanah! But what's the first thing we have to rectify? What's the greatest *teshuvah* we could do? Saying "*Hashem Melech!*" Proclaiming Hashem as King is the biggest *teshuvah* you can do! We can't waste time saying **עַל הַחַטָּא שְׁחַטְּאֵנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ** on Rosh Hashanah; we can't be busy

enumerating this *cheit* and that *cheit*, because there's one very big *cheit* we have to take care of first! There's one overall failure of Mankind that must be rectified on Rosh Hashanah before anything else and that's the failure to recognize that *Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed*. This little *cheit* or that little *cheit* you'll worry about that later. There'll be time for that during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* and *Yom Kippur*. All of our *chata'im* are minor things. They're all *toldos*; they're all results of that one big *cheit*. And today, on the first day of the year, we're dealing with the big *cheit*, the one that causes all others, and that's forgetting about Hakodosh Boruch Hu, forgetting that He's the King.

That's a very important piece of advice you're hearing now. Saying *Hashem Melech* is the most important form of *teshuva*, and that's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu will consider most when He thinks about our fate for the year to come. The more a person gets into his blood the spirit of *הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם וְעַד*, the more he deserves to live. And so, all day long we stand on our feet and shout *הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הַשֵּׁם מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם וְעַד*. He'll forever be the King in our minds — no matter how many things are in the world that try to make us forget about Him. That's the secret of saving your life on Rosh Hashanah because now you understand what life is for! The secret of another year of life is to get "*Hashem Melech*" into your blood.

### ***Awareness for All Year***

Now, isn't it a pity that a lot of people come on Rosh Hashanah to *shul* and never once think of this principle that Rosh Hashanah represents. A thousand other things they'll think about, but not the *ikar*. And it's so very essential that we do think about it because a person's judgment on Rosh Hashanah depends on his realization of this principle. That's the biggest *teshuvah*; to internalize that there's nothing else in the world. That's what has to get into our heads — that there is nothing intrinsic in our lives other than Hashem. It's all a deception. Money, cars, houses – even children – everything in this world is a deception. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the only entity that exists in the world, and therefore on this day we get busy reminding

ourselves, we get busy engraving into our minds that He is everything – *Hashem Melech!*

Rosh Hashanah comes to recharge our batteries and to give us the Awareness that we need for all year long. And that's why we should labor all day long thinking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu as the *Melech Ha'olam*. So as you stand in *shul* on Rosh Hashanah and the *chazan* is singing tra-la-la, you can think – you can sing along too, but you should think, “Tra-la-la, *Hashem Melech!* Tra-la-la, we're singing to announce the reign of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Today is the day I'm committing myself to a year of reminding myself as much as I possibly can that Hashem is my King!”

### ***The Ancient Commitment***

And that was the commitment that the *Am Yisroel* made to Hakodosh Boruch Hu at the *Yam Suf*. If you go back to the beginning of our history you'll remember that when the *Am Yisroel* stood at the *Yam Suf* they made a great declaration. They said a number of things there, but we're going to listen to the last thing they said. You know, when you write a *shtar*, a legal document, so you have to be *chozer b'shitah achronah* – you have to repeat the contents of the document on the last line. You sum everything up at the end – like they say in America, “What's the bottom line?” The bottom line; that's what matters. And what's the bottom line, *l'havdil*, of the *shiras hayam*? The last thing they said was הַשֵּׁם יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד – *Hashem will reign supreme forever and ever*.

It was a *shevuah* they were taking: “We're proclaiming now that Hashem is our King forever.” Not a king in the sense of a *mashal*, some vague idea; a word in the *siddur* that means almost nothing at all. “He's actually our King,” they said, “and from now on we take orders only from Him.” That was the promise they made at the *Yam Suf*: “We are going to announce always that *Hashem Melech*, and we're going to live our lives according to those two words.” And our job in this world is to continue that commitment that our fathers and mothers made at the *Yam Suf*; to proclaim Hashem as King over *ourselves* all the days of our lives.

## A New Way of Life

Not only on Rosh Hashanah. Even on a regular Wednesday afternoon you should remind yourself about the commitment you made on Rosh Hashanah: “Oh yes, I remember that day in the shul. The *chazan* was singing tra-la-la, and I was telling myself that Hashem is the King.” So you’re walking in the street on Kings Highway and the sun is shining and you remind yourself, “There’s no sun! It’s all *Hashem Melech* doing everything.” And when you pass by the fruit stand, again, “There’s no fruit in that fruit bin – it’s the *dvar Hashem!*” You can shout it too: “*Hashem Melech!*” Wait till the train comes by and there’s such a loud noise from the train and the cars and the trucks, no one will hear you. Shout “*Hashem Melech!*”

And when you come into the house and you want to drink a glass of water, same thing: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. Every time you say a *bracha* you mention that – *Melech ha'olam*; He's the King of the World. כָּל בְּרָכָה שֶׁאֵין בָּהּ מַלְכוּת אֵינָה בְּרָכָה – “Any *bracha* you say without mentioning the kingship of Hashem is not a *bracha*” (*Brachos* 12a). It's not something added in *derech agav*, just something poetic we say – like other nations have kings, so we'll also say we have a king. No, this king is the real thing. All the other ones are the wrong address. *Hashem Melech!* Hashem is my King! That's what you have to be getting into your head all the time. Whatever you do, wherever you are, you're always saying *Melech Ha'olam*. We're always putting that idea into our thoughts: “He's my King.” That's the life of a Jew – it's a life of proclaiming that Hashem is our King.

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

## Part III. Declaring His Kingdom

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### Understanding the Shofar

And now we can come back to *Yom Teruah*; to understanding what the *shofar* of Rosh Hashana is all about. Everyone knows that when we blow the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah, it's saying עורו ישנים, *Wake up, you sleepers*. That's what the Rambam writes: עורו ישנים מתרדמתכם – *You people who are fast asleep, awoken from your slumber!*

Wake up for what? Now, we could say, “Wake up and remember this *aveirah*,” or “Wake up and do *teshuva* for that *aveirah*” – we could have said that. But we're learning now that fundamentally what the *shofar* is saying is, “Wake up and think about *Hashem Melech*.” Wake up and think about what we're speaking about here tonight.

Now, I know the *mefarshim* say many *kavanos* for *tekiyas shofar*, and in the *machzor* I'm sure you'll find a number of explanations for why we blow *shofar*, but it's actually our old friend *Bilaam* who came and explained the *possuk* of יום תרועה יהיה לכם – *It should be a day of blowing for you*.

### The Royal Trumpet

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

That's why we blow the *shofar*. That was the practice in the olden days – when a king began his reign, it was announced by the blowing of trumpets. And on Rosh Hashanah, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is announced as the *Melech*. עלה אלקים בתרועה – *Hashem ascends by means of the sound of the trumpet* (*Tehillim* 47:6). Of course, we already explained that He doesn't need our coronation to ascend the throne. We won't make Him any more of a *melech* no matter how much we blow. It's silly; a little man on this earth takes a ram, saws off its horn, stands up in *shul*, and gives a blow, tooo-tooo-tooo, and *Hashem* becomes elevated thereby?! The Creator of the universe

who created billions of star worlds in which this earth is a speck of dust, and because one human being or a thousand or even a million human beings blow on the *shofar*, so He becomes exalted now from tooo-toooo-toooo? Of course not.

So what is meant when we say *עָלָה אֱלֹקִים בְּתוֹרֵעָה*? The answer is that Hashem becomes exalted *in our minds* by means of our announcing His kingship. He is elevated in the minds of Mankind when they announce His sovereignty by blowing the *shofar*. That's the purpose of the *shofar* – to remind ourselves that Hashem is the King. And so the *shofar* comes along on Rosh Hashanah and blows: Tooooo-tooooo-tooooo! Wake up, you sleepers. Wake up, it's Rosh Hashanah.

So as you stand in *shul* on Rosh Hashanah and the *ba'al tokei'a* is blowing, you're waking yourself up; you're thinking: "The most important thing right now is Hashem Melech. We're announcing the reign of Hakodosh Boruch Hu." That's what has to get into our heads – that there is nothing intrinsic in our lives other than Hashem.

### **The Shofar – Through Thick and Thin**

And that's what the *shofar* is always telling us. It says in the Torah (*Bamidbar* 10:9): *וְכִי תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאַרְצְכֶם – וְהִרְעַתֶּם, וְהִרְעַתְּם, בְּחֻצְצֹרֹת וְנִזְכְּרֹתֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם*, so you should blow *shofar* and Hashem will hear. Then it says right after that *possuk*, (*ibid.* 10:10), *וּבְיוֹם שְׂמֵחָתְכֶם, וּבְיוֹמֵי רֵעָה – וְהִרְעַתְּם, בְּחֻצְצֹרֹת*, you'll also blow *shofar*. What is this *shofar* that it has two different purposes, one for crying out for help and one for rejoicing?

The answer is what we've been speaking about all along. We're saying two things here but both are one. The *shofar* that you use in a time of *tzarah*, *chalilah*, to cry out for help, that *shofar* means we don't go to anyone else for help. Even though we have an army, even though we have weapons, it's nothing. It's only You, Hashem – You are the One Who leads us into battle. When we cry out with a *shofar* against our enemies, we are declaring that we have no outlook for any kind of help except from You alone: *אֵין לָנוּ מִלֵּךְ אֲלֵא אַתָּה* – "We

have only one hope and that's You, Hashem." And that's because we know that it's all You anyhow. There's no enemy and there's no enemy battle plans – it's all You. That's the *shofar* of *ki savo'u milchama b'artzichem*.

### **Hashem Melech In The Camps**

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

Not only in the concentration camps. We call out to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for help all day long; we say *Refa'einu, Hashem* – Please, Hashem, heal us from our illnesses. *Barech aleinu* – Send us *parnassah* so we should have something to eat. We're crying out to Hashem all day long because that's how we declare Him our *Melech*. "Whatever we need, only You can make it happen."

### **Hashem Melech In The Fields**

Now, that's only one side. But suppose you're successful in your life. You brought in your crops. You harvested your field. You have wine. You have oil. You have plenty of grain. You're happy. So now you come together on *yom tov* to celebrate: *Chag Ha'asif, Chag Habikkurim*, you have to blow the *shofar*. *בְּיוֹם שִׁמְחַתְּכֶם וּבְמוֹעֵיכֶם* – On the *yamim tovim*, we blow the *shofar*. Why blow then? Same thing. To show that it comes from Hashem. *It comes from You, Hashem!* We blow the *shofar* to say, "You're the King!"

Here you have a farmer who worked all summer. He plowed his field. He planted. He harvested. He threshed the grain. He winnowed

it. He ground it. It's hard work being a farmer. And now, after it's all over, he has in front of him a piece of bread on the table. What does he say? He says בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לָחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ. You're the One who did it. I didn't do anything. All of my labor is nothing; it's all you. So בְּיָוֵם שְׂמֵחַתְּכֶם, when you blow *shofar* and say, "Hashem Melech," you're announcing that all of your happiness, all of your success comes only from Hashem. All that is included in *teruas melech*, announcing Hashem as King.

### **Hashem Melech At The Chasuna**

And even when a man goes to his wedding — Ah! It's a *sasson v'simchah*, he's drunk with happiness. Everybody's dancing and singing. The orchestra is playing. But it's all nothing. While he's standing under the *chuppah* there are so many distractions: "Is my tie straight?" "Is the ring still in my pocket?" "Is Uncle Max getting a *kibud*?" But instead, he's thinking only one thing: "Hashem Melech!" Don't forget Hashem for one moment. He is right there next to you, between you and the *kallah*. He's there! Don't forget about Him. The *kallah* too shouldn't forget! Nothing in the world should make you forget Hashem.

That's the lesson the Torah wants us to learn: When the enemies come into your land, what's the first response? Blow the *shofar* and remind yourself that *Hashem Melech*! And when the days of happiness come, the *yom simchaschem*, what's your response? Same thing! Blow the *shofar* and declare, "Hashem Melech!"

### **Don't Get Lost In The Details**

That's what Bilaam meant when he said, וְהִתְרוּעֵת מְלֶכֶךְ בּוֹ – it's a nation that is always talking about their King. They're always shouting for Him! *Frum* Jews live by the *Shulchan Aruch* but you have to know that the higher *Shulchan Aruch* is written in the *Chumash*; the *Shulchan Aruch* is only a *peirush* on the *Chumash*. So the first of all of our obligations is to think about what it says in the *Chumash*. That's number one. That's the first *Shulchan Aruch* of all and in the *Chumash* it says that this is the power of the *Am Yisroel*. הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ עִמּוֹ –

Hashem their G-d is with them. Do you know why? וְהִרְוַעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ — because they are always proclaiming Him King.

Now, that's so important that it cannot be overemphasized. People fall into the habit of forgetting the *yesodos*. They're thinking about this *halachah*, that *sugya*. They're thinking only about the details, and after a while they forget that *Hashem Melech*. Of course, it's good to be *frum*; it's excellent. Wear your *tzitzis* out. Beautiful! Wear black hats. Excellent! Wear *peyos*. Be *mekayeim mitzvos*. Very good, very good! But you have to know that the number one requirement of a Jew is to think about Hashem.

### **The First New Year's Resolution**

And so, when people look forward to the ensuing year and are thinking, "What program, what resolution, should I adopt that would cause me to find favor in the eyes of Hashem and make me deserving of another chance?" this is what they should think about first: "I'm going to make Hashem my king."

You should try it once in a while. Once in a while, make some time to think about Hashem. Get in the habit of keeping your mind as much as possible on Hashem – you can start with just a minute or two. You have to exercise your thinking muscles by focusing for one minute or two minutes. It's not easy but that's the most important endeavor that we are expected to achieve in this life. Once you get the knack of it, you'll keep adding. And if you grab onto it and don't let go, you can look forward to great things. You'll be from the exceptional ones who think about Hashem all their lives – during the day in the streets, when you're at work, in the *yeshiva* where you're learning, at home with the children. You'll get up with *Hashem Melech* and you'll go to sleep with *Hashem Melech*. Ah! Now that's a life worth living.

### **Living For The King**

Every year we ask for another chance, and now we understand that if we look forward to a career of *deveikus*, of thinking about Hashem, of keeping Hashem in our minds as much as possible, then

we have a certain bargaining card with Hashem. We could tell Him, “Please, Hakodosh Boruch Hu, we are going to be *avadim* who recognize Your *malchus*. We’re going to declare Hashem Melech throughout the year – not merely by saying the words, but by living in consonance with the principle that Hashem is everything. And then we’ll be living for a purpose.”

So Rosh Hashanah is not only for the coming year. Many times Rosh Hashanah is a day that has ramifications for one’s whole life. That’s how it is for a person who makes use of Rosh Hashanah. And not only in this life – the Next World, too. When you blow *shofar* and you thinking *בוּ וְתִרְוַעַת מְלֶכֶךְ בּוּ*, it’s a proclamation that Hashem is our Melech. All our hopes are on Him; all our loyalty is to Him. And if you say that, if you put that truth into your head, then Hashem says, “If so, then you’re going to be with Me forever and ever. *אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם לֹא שָׁנִיתִי* – I, Hashem, never changed, *וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב לֹא כְּלִיתֶם* – and you, too, will never come to an end. (Malachi 3:6) You make Me your King in this world and I will be with you forever, in this world and in the World to Come.”

## לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתְּבוּ וְתִחַתְמוּ

### Continued from back cover

He advises however, that even though each week is to be devoted to its own *middah*, it’s still good to skim through the list every day, just to remind yourself. Even the *middos* that you’re not working on this week, the names of them on the list will remind you about them.

And therefore, there are systems of how a person can succeed in working on his *middos*. And the Cheshbon Hanefesh’s system is a valuable one. And there could be other ones, other programs as well. Whatever it is, it will require planning, and it will require effort. Good things don’t come easy.

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**If one has several undesirable qualities of character that have to be changed, should he try to correct them all at once, or separately?**

A:

That depends how much time a person has. But practically, it's advisable to take one at a time. And one at a time really means months and months. It takes months of hard work to uproot a bad *middah*.

However, there is a sefer called Cheshbon Hanefesh, and he has a program for working on many *middos* at one time. But it's a system, a system with a plan that has to be followed rigorously. According to his system, you choose thirteen *middos* that you feel are necessary for yourself to work on. And then you compose thirteen paragraphs, one for each *middah*, that are full of admonitions and wise counsel about these *middos*. It would include *maamarei Chazal*, advice culled from the *mussar seforim*, practical *eitzos* for your own situation – anything that would help you move forward with that *middah*.

Now, each week you concentrate on only one of the thirteen. Thirteen is a fourth of the year, so in the course of a year, over fifty-two weeks, each *middah* is repeated four times. Thirteen *middos* in thirteen weeks, and in the course of fifty-two weeks, you've gone through each *middah* four times.

Continued on page 21

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