

Jewish Kings

The Purpose of the Jewish King

“When you will enter the land, and you will say, I wish to appoint a king... You shall appoint upon yourself a king whom Hashem will choose¹.”

From these verses we see that appointing a king is a mitzvah². Nevertheless, Prophet Shmuel later criticized the Jewish people for demanding a king. “You have sinned by asking for a king. 'יה' מלְכֶכֶם, Hashem, your G-d, is your king,” he rebuked them³. You have no need for a government like all other nations do.

If there is a mitzvah to appoint a king, why did Shmuel criticize the Jewish people for demanding one?

The purpose of the Jewish king was not to protect the people or enable them to prosper materially. For that we have Hashem. We need only to adhere loyally to Hashem’s Torah for material success and prosperity.

The people had asked Shmuel for a king who would defend the country. For that there was no need for a king, "יה' מלְכֶכֶם", Hashem protects the Jewish people.

If so, what then is the purpose of the Jewish king?

The Jewish king serves as the medium through which the kingship of Hashem is revealed on Earth. Malchus, true Jewish kingship, is compared to the moon which radiates no light of its own; it merely reflects the rays of the sun. The Jewish king is fully cognizant that the glory of his reign is merely a reflection of the grandeur of Hashem’s kingship. He completely divests himself of any pleasure or honor his position brings him. He is the most humble Jew and is aware that he is merely a vessel through which the kingship of Hashem is manifest.

It is clear to all who see the true Jewish king sitting on the royal throne that it is the kingship of Hashem which he represents. His awe of G-d is plainly visible upon his countenance. The complete self-nullification of the king inspired those who see him to likewise submit themselves to Hashem’s kingship.

The reverence and respect paid to the king were but homage to the kingship of G–d which he represented. Jewish sovereignty is but a tool for the establishment of Hashem’s kingdom on Earth.

Of the Seven Attributes with which Hashem created the world, the Jewish king embodied the seventh Attribute, Malchus. Malchus means to completely nullify oneself to the kingdom of Hashem. People naturally obey and revere one who exemplifies Malchus, i.e. who has no personal interests in life other than that the kingship of Hashem should be revealed on Earth. The person of Malchus merits their own Malchus.¹

Amalek Had to be Destroyed Before the Bais HaMikdash Could be Built

¹ Each of the seven attributes are expressed in evil as well as in holiness. However, all Malchus, even Malchus of evil, must somehow be subservient to Hashem. It cannot totally deny Him like the other evil forces do.

Each of the seven nations who inhabited Eretz Yisrael prior to the Jewish conquest of the land were embodiments of the evil counterparts to the seven attributes. גֵּרְגִשִׁי, the seventh of the nations corresponded to Malchus. They did not wage war against the Jewish people but left their territory. As Malchus, they submitted to Hashem who designated Eretz Yisrael for the Jewish people. (בני יששכר)

There is a power on this world which brazenly defies the rule of its creator: Amalek. The people of Amalek epitomize and proliferate a culture of egoism and denial of G-d. עמלק is gematria רם, haughty (they both equal 240). Amalek holds themselves so high that they block the rays of Hashem who is compared to a sun and shield, שמש ומגן ה'. They imagine themselves to be self-made and do not recognize that their shine is merely a reflection.

In order for the kingdom of Hashem to be truly manifest on this world, Amalek has to be completely obliterated. Their destruction had to precede the building of the Bais HaMikdash because the Bais HaMikdash was the place where the kingdom of Hashem was manifest on earth.

In the Musaf prayer of Yom Tov we lament that as a result of the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash, "אין אנו יכולים להשתחוות לפניך", we can no longer bow before you. This seems strange. The Bais HaMikdash was necessary in order to offer sacrifices, but Jews bow before G-d in every place they find themselves.

The Tanya explains that only in the Bais HaMikdash was it possible to truly bow before Hashem. Bowing is not merely a bending of the knees. It is the act of completely nullifying and submitting oneself to Hashem. This is something which cannot be achieved just anywhere. Only in the Bais HaMikdash, where the presence of Hashem was openly revealed, was it possible to truly bow before Him.

Three Interconnected Mitzvos

Upon conquering and inhabiting Eretz Yisrael, the Jewish people were commanded to fulfill three Mitzvos. First, they were to appoint a king. Then, the king was to lead them in battle against Amalek. After Amalek was destroyed, the king was to build the Bais HaMikdash.⁷

The king, who was an embodiment of Hashem's kingship, was to destroy Amalek, who obscured it, thereby readying the world for the Bais HaMikdash, where Hashem's kingdom was manifest on earth.

This will only truly occur with the coming of Mashiach. Only when ועלו מושעים בהר ציון, Mashiach, the ultimate Jewish king, conquers את הר עשו the mountain of Eisav - i.e. his chief descendants who are Amalek, will Hashem openly reign as the king of his universe, והיתה לה' המלוכה.

Amalek, the עשו הר obscures the הר ציון, where Hashem's presence dwelt. However, even, כי "משם, תגביה כנשר קנך", if Amalek raises himself high like the eagle which flies higher than any other bird, "אורידך נאום ה'", from there I will cast him down, says Hashem.

Rosh Hashana, the Bais HaMikdash and the Jewish King

The Sefer Yetzirah teaches that the world was created in three dimensions. This is referred to as עשן which is an acronym for עולם – place, שנה - time, and נפש – person. For every person, there is a corresponding point in space and time.

The person of Malchus is the king. The place of Malchus is the Bais HaMikdash. The time of Malchus is Rosh Hashana.

ראש השנה is gematria בית המקדש (they both equal 861). Rosh Hashana rules over all the other days of the year. The fate of each day is determined through Rosh Hashana. Therefore, whenever "היום" - 'the

day' - is mentioned in Tanach without reference to a specific day, it refers to Rosh Hashana, the Day of all Days.²

The Bais HaMikdash is the king over all the places. When the verse states, "ויפגע במקום," he encountered "the place," we know that it is referring to the place of the Bais HaMikdash the Place of all Places.³

We are obligated to revere the king, "שתהא אימתו עליך". We are obligated to act with respect in the Bais HaMikdash, "ומקדשי תיראו". On Rosh Hashana we conduct ourselves with reverence; even the angels tremble before the awesomeness of the day. We have to respect the king of person, place and also of time.

Anyone who saw the Jewish king was filled with subservience to Hashem. In the Bais HaMikdash, we were also inspired to submit ourselves to G-d. On Rosh Hashana our focus is to completely nullify ourselves before Him. Our only desire on Rosh Hashana should be "מלוך על כל העולם כולו", that Hashem should reign upon the entire world.

Shlomo is the Moon in its Completeness

Initially the Moon was created as an equal to the Sun. However, it wanted to be bigger and more important. As a punishment it was decreed that every month it should become smaller and smaller until it completely disappears. However, the Moon does not remain invisible forever; it soon begins to grow again until it reaches its climax on the fifteenth of the month, the full moon.

Jewish kingship follows the cycle of the moon. Fifteen generations after the birth of Avraham Avinu, it reached its pinnacle with King Shlomo. Over the next fifteen generations, the greatness of the Jewish kingship waned until it vanished completely when Tzidkiyahu was taken into exile. However, like the moon which reappears faithfully on the first of every month, Jewish kingship will be restored through Mashiach. The sin of the Moon will then be permanently and completely rectified and it will never again be diminished.⁴

Shlomo lived in lavish luxury and splendor. He was nevertheless completely aware that the radiance of his full, glowing moon was merely a reflection of the sun.

There was never a man who so completely nullified himself before Hashem like Shlomo. שלמה, which means peace, did not have his own identity. His name was merely a reflection of the מלך שהשלום, Hashem whose name is שלום. He was fully aware that he not an independent being; he was only a reflection and embodiment of G-dliness.

The Moon wanted self-glorification; it did not nullify itself to Hashem. Therefore, it is not a full, glowing circle in the sky. Shlomo rectified its mistake by recognizing that all of his grandeur was but a ray of Hashem's greatness. Therefore, his kingship was like the Moon in its rectified form, as a full, glowing body. His reign was a sampling of the kingship of Mashiach' when the Moon will be permanently restored to its original glory.⁴

² In EYOV 1:6, היום refers to Rosh Hashana ("עיין שם רש"י). Students of the Baal Shem Tov interpret "אתם נצבים היום כלכם", as referring to Rosh Hashana.

³ The Bais HaMikdash is built "במקום אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו" (דברים יז:ה), in the place of Hashem's choosing, and we are similarly to appoint "מלך אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו" (דברים יז:טו), a king whom Hashem chooses.

⁴ "וראינה בנות ציון במלך שלמה" (שיר השירים ג:יא), 'Daughters of Tzion! Gaze at King Shlomo,' is gematria התקין צורת הלבנה, he rectified the countenance of the moon (they both equal 1353) because King Shlomo rectified the moon.

The essence of the mitzvah of appointing a king is to appoint Mashiach, who will subjugate all of creation under Hashem's sovereignty. Therefore, the commandment of appointing a king, תשים עליך מלך, is gematria "וירם קרן משיחו"⁵, He will raise the glory of Mashiach (they both equal 970).

Shlomo Dedicated Everything to Hashem

As the Torah leader of the Jewish people, Shlomo introduced two rabbinical enactments. One is Netilas Yadayim, washing ones hands before eating bread. The other one is Eiruv, transforming a public domain into a private domain through an Eiruv (thereby allowing free transfer of items otherwise restricted on Shabbos).

The essence of both of these enactments is to bring the entire creation under Hashem's kingship.

Upon washing our hands before eating we recite the blessing, על נטילת ידיים, means to lift upward⁵ and refers to the lifting up of the hands after washing them. The most important part of Netilas Yadayim is to hold up all ten fingers, thereby dedicating all of the ten powers of the soul to heaven. The dedication of all our powers for the service of Hashem is the intent of the mitzvah of Netilas Yadayim.⁶

"מלך אשר יבחר ה'" is gematria "וציונו על נטילת ידיים" (they both equal 751). The task of the king is to teach everybody how to dedicate all of their powers to Hashem.

An Eiruv creates a private domain from a public one.

One G-d created Heaven and Earth. Superficially, the creation seems to be composed of many disparate forces. Idol worshipers are blinded by the external appearance of the world and think that these forces have real power, when in truth they are no more than illusions.

Regarding the laws of carrying items on Shabbos there are two domains, רשות היחיד, the domain of one - the private domain, and רשות הרבים, the domain of many - the public domain.

רשות היחיד is the domain of holiness. It is the realm of those who recognize the underlying force of the One G-d in all of creation. רשות הרבים is the domain of evil who consider the many forces that seem to be operating as the ultimate reality.

King Shlomo made a רשות היחוד from a רשות הרבים through his institution of the Eiruv. Thereby, he brought the entire creation, even the evil forces, into the domain of the One G-d.⁷

The Climax of Shlomo's Greatness

The Midrash teaches that Ruth, the matriarch of the Davidic dynasty, lived to see Shlomo judging the two harlots who claimed the same baby⁷. What was the significance of this court case?

Satan is petrified of Mashiach's arrival because that will spell his demise. Therefore, he always tried to harm the carrier of the seed of Mashiach as it was being born. In order to prevent the Satan from doing so, Hashem always hid the seed of Mashiach. (This was explained at length in Parshas Masei.)

⁵ It is used this way in the verse, "ישעיה סג:ט) (ישעיה עולם) "כל-ימי עולם".

⁶ Ten times מלך, king, is gematria "וישב שלמה על כסא ה'", Shlomo sat on the throne of G-d (they both equal 900). King Shlomo sat on the throne of G-d because he dedicated all of the **ten** powers of his soul to Hashem.

⁷ Bringing the entire world under the kingship of Hashem was also King Shlomo's goal with his marriage of the thousand gentile princesses. If the princesses of each nation would be part of the kingship of Hashem, the nations would recognize His reign as well. However, he was unsuccessful with the daughter of Pharaoh. Shlomo failed in his mission because the world was not ready at that point for the Ultimate Redemption.

This went on until Hashem promised David that his offspring will endure forever and will inherit the throne, ⁸ "מפרי בטנך אשית לכסא לך וכי"י". From then on the Satan had no permission to destroy the seed of Mashiach.

Shlomo had no need to fear the Satan. However, this went even further. Being that Shlomo's reign was a sampling of the era of Mashiach, not only did he not cower before the forces of evil, he ruled over them.

The Ar"i HaKadosh reveals that the two harlots which presented their dispute before Shlomo were none other than the two feminine forces of evil⁹.

These two beings were the very apex of evil. Holiness knows of only One Power under which everything is subjugated. Evil is blinded by the plurality of forces and is represented by two, the first integer after one.¹⁰ Furthermore, the feminine side of evil is much stronger than the masculine side.⁷

That the *two women* of evil should humbly stand¹¹ before a *man* of holiness, and meekly plead before him to have mercy is something that was only able to occur during the reign of Shlomo because his reign was a sampling of the days of Mashiach when all of creation will submit to the kingship of holiness.

Boaz spoke to Ruth when she was at her lowest point collecting the fallen, forgotten stalks of wheat in order to be able to survive. He told her "ויתָהּ מִשְׁכַּרְתָּךְ שְׁלֵמָה"¹², your reward shall be complete. The Midrash interprets this to mean that she will see her grandson שלמה presiding over the above-mentioned court-case.

Boaz was telling Ruth, now you have to be at the lowest rank of the socioeconomic strata in order to avoid the radar of the Satan who wants to harm you because you carry the seed of Mashiach. However, you will live to see the strongest representation of the Satan trembling in fear before your descendant Shlomo.¹² (This was explained at length on Shevuos.)

A פנים חדשות to Malchus

Usually when a son inherits his father's throne, he does not need to be anointed anew because his kingdom is not new; it is merely a continuation of his father's. However, because there were those who argued that Shlomo should not inherit the throne,¹³ he was anointed to secure his position. Nonetheless, there was a reason why Hashem caused it so that Shlomo was anointed anew.

Shlomo's kingdom was a new phenomenon. It was much more elevated than David's. Shlomo reigned on the Heavens as well as on all the creatures of the Earth. Even the evil forces were under his authority.

⁸ Hashem then compared his monarchy to the Moon which will endure forever; "כירה יכון עולם".

כירה יכון עולם is gematria שלמה המלך (they both equal 470). King Shlomo's kingdom represented the ultimate fulfillment of Hashem's promise to David. His reign was compared to the permanently glowing Moon of the era of Mashiach.

⁹ They are diametrically opposed to Rachel and Leah, the two feminine aspects of Holiness.

¹⁰ That is why the Gehinom was created on the *second* day of creation.

¹¹ The verse states (ותעמדנה מלכים א' יג:טז), they stood.

¹² "וְשִׁכַחְתָּ עֵמֶר בְּשֹׂדֶה", the forgotten stalks which Ruth was forced to collect, is gematria משכרתך שלמה (they both equal 1355).

¹³ His brother Adoniyahu usurped the kingdom and made a banquet. When they informed David of this, he instructed that Shlomo should be publicly anointed.

Shlomo's sanctification of the Bais HaMikdash lasted, not only for the first Bais HaMikdash which he built, but forever, even for Mashiach's era.¹⁰ Shlomo's kingdom was a sampling of the kingdom of Mashiach.

A Chassan and Kallah are similar to a king and queen. Every marriage accomplishes something unique that no one else could have; it rebuilds one of the ruins of Yerushalayim, thereby hastening the coming of Mashiach. משמח חתן עם הכלה, Who makes a Chassan and Kallah rejoice, is gematria בונה אמן ברחמי ירושלים, Hashem rebuilds Yerushalayim with compassion, Amen (they both equal 1016).

A פנים חדשות, a new face (i.e. a person who was not previously present at the marriage celebration) is necessary by each Sheva Berachos. This is to show that this couple is a new phenomenon; their marriage hastens the arrival of Mashiach in a way that no other one could have. סעודת משיח, a feast of Mashiach is gematria פנים חדשות (they both equal 898). Each chassan and kallah accomplish something completely unique so that we should soon all be able to partake of the feast of Mashiach.

May Hashem rejoice with the Jewish people, like the chassan rejoices with the kallah, and may Tzion rejoice with her children. May it be the will of Hashem that the promise of this week's Haftora be fulfilled:

"פצחו רננו יחדו חרבות ירושלים כי נחם ה' עמו גאל ירושלים."

Open up in song, ruins of Yerushalayim, for Hashem has consoled his people, he has redeemed Yerushalayim.

^א דברים יז:טו

^ב ברמב"ם – מינוי מלך הוא מתרי"ג מצוות

^ג שמואל א' יב:יג

^ד רמב"ם הלכות מלכים

^ה ירמיהו מט:טז

^ו בראשית כח:יא

^ז ספרי שופטים פ"ד י"ד

^ח ויקרא יט:ל, כו:ב

^ט בברכת חידוש הלבנה – שהם עתידים להתחדש כמותה וגו'

^י רמב"ם סוף הלכות מלכים

^{יא} שמואל א' ב:י

^{יב} מדרש רבה רות ב' סימן ב'

^{יג} תהלים קלב:יא

^{יד} כמבואר באור החיים פ' ויגש

^{טו} רות ב:יב

^{טז} רמב"ם

^{יז} ישעיה נב:ה