

# I

## **CHILDREN, SERVANTS**

**Parshas Nitzovim**

**By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach**

Each of the three sections of the Musaf of Rosh Hashana concludes with the sound of the shofar. Following the shofar sound we recite “Hayom Haras Olom, Today is the birth[day] of the world. Today all creatures of the world stand in judgment – whether as children [of Hashem] or as servants”.

It is obvious that it is not meant to express doubt if we may be considered as children, or “only” as servants. We are certainly considered as children. So testifies the Torah, “You are children to Hashem your G-d” (Devorim 14:1). What it means, rather, is that in addition to being judged as children, thus, the supplication “be merciful with us as the mercy of a father for his children”, we are also judged as servants. What quality is added by the reference as servants?

The appropriate answer may be gleaned from our Sidra Nitzovim. According to Rashi (29:1) this occurred on the very last day of Moshe’s life, a kind of farewell address. He gathered together every member of the Jewish people, the heads of all tribes, the elders and the young, men and women. On this auspicious last day of his life he reinitiated them into the covenant of Hashem and into His Torah. What was added at this gathering to what has been Moshe’s mission hitherto, all his life? Expounds the Or Hachaim it was the concept of ARVUS the responsibility for one another. It is the

obligation of every Jew to exert an influence upon others, whenever feasible, to observe the Mitzvochs of the Torah. This is the task of a servant. [At a minimum one may exert influence upon others by example.]

Some commentators write about the elaborate anecdotes of Joseph's life, particularly his dreams of royalty and finally his behavior as viceroy of Egypt, as harbinger of future experiences of the Jewish people (see Reb Yaakov Kaminetzky in Emes L'Yaakov). One may suggest it is also a forerunner to Hashem's kingdom of Israel.

The Chumosh relates the experience of the two servants of Pharaoh, the butler and the baker, who transgressed against their master. In the prison, where Joseph too was falsely placed, the servants experienced dreams which Joseph interpreted for them. This led the cupbearer (the butler), after his release from prison, to cause Joseph's freedom to interpret Pharaoh's dream and all that followed. The question arises, what is the purpose of relating the anecdote of the baker and his dream? All that was important is the butler, who knew about Joseph's ability to interpret dreams.

The answer is that the butler spent some time in prison because he too was guilty. The task of "servants" is to watch one another to assure the safety of their master. He was, in a smaller degree, guilty for the baker's sin.

This was the purpose of Moshe's gathering of all members of Israel: Responsibility for one another.

On Rosh Hashana, in addition to being judged as children, we are also judged as servants, if the task of responsibility for one another was executed. For this we pray for divine grace.

## II

# **THE CORONATION - A PROCESS**

**Erev Rosh Hashana**

**By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach**

The kingdom of the Al-mighty plays a paramount role in the very Avoda (worship, service) of Rosh Hashana. This relationship of Israel with the Almighty as King continues for ten days, until the last day, Yom Kippur. The keen observer can sense a certain development in attaining such a high venerated achievement, beginning with Rosh Hashana, and gaining daily strength, rising from strength to strength, "M'Chayil El Chayil" (Tehilim 84:8) the apex reaching up on Yom Kippur. Even as such, a process, a step by step procedure, it is mind boggling. Human beings, flesh and blood, led by the King, who is that King? It is no other than the Al-mighty Himself. "Mi Hu Zeh...? Who is this King of glory? It is HASHEM, Master of Legions... selah" (Tehilim 24:10).

The Talmud teaches that the Al-mighty Himself initiated this course of events. "Said Hashem: 'Recite before Me on Rosh Hashana (verses of) Kingship... so that you may accept My sovereignty upon yourselves'" (Rosh Hashana 34b). One gathers from this teaching that if not for this request from Above the idea would not, could not, have been the brain child of a human, an earthly creative. The Al-mighty, however, did desire such a relationship because a king feels close to his citizens, bears utmost responsibility to those who elected him, MELECH CHOFAITZ B'CHAIM, "The King wants life" for his

people. This divine throne, is thus, “established upon chesed” (kindness), as told in Unsane Tokéf.

One finds an example of a divine initiative for an item which a human would otherwise have been unable to achieve. The Talmud relates about a certain prayer which the Al-mighty Himself recites (Brochos 7a). All prayers are addressed to the Al-mighty. What is the meaning of His prayer to Himself? It is a means to facilitate the human to supplicate for certain items, which he couldn't without divine reinforcement.

Yet, even with the divine assistance, the awesome achievement of the divine royalty is developed step by step. “On the first night of Rosh Hashana, the recital of chapter 24 with excitement and pathos speaks of the “entrance” of the King. “Raise up O gates... raise up your everlasting entrances, so that the King of Glory may enter. This entrance is the commencement of a ten day period of utter closeness to Hashem. “Seek Hashem while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6). “These are the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur” (Rosh Hashana 18a). The summit is reached on Yom Kippur. On that day, through atonement, a warmer relationship is reached with the King of Israel. Interestingly the blessing of the day includes a double “melech”. “‘Melech’ who forgives and atones, (and) ‘melech’ who sanctifies Israel and Yom Kippur”.

A historic anecdote, recorded in Talmud (Pesochim 56a), may offer deeper insight into this assertion of Malchios being procedural. It was when Yaakov gathered his children, leaving a legacy with them when he was nearing his last days. “Assemble yourselves and I will

tell you what will befall you in the end of days". Clearly Yaakov refers to the future, "Achris Hayomim" (Braishis 49:1). Concerned lest any of his sons is not worthy of that blessed future, they proclaim: "Shema Yisroel..." Upon this reassurance, Yaakov responds: Boruch Shaim Kevod Malchuso..." "Blessed is the Name of His glorious Kingdom for all eternity". In this response Yaakov clarified the recital of Shema to mean the acceptance of Hashem as our King. How is it that in the Chumosh (Devorim 6:4) the portion of Shema does not include Yaakov's response "Boruch Shaim"? The reason is that a future of Israel on that high spiritual level, enabling them to proclaim Hashem as their King has to materialize, step by step. On that day, "Hashem will be King over all the world... on that day Hashem will be One and His name will be One (Zecharia 14:9).

Yaakov, in his introduction to his children, mentioned he will reveal to them "Achris Hayomim". Indeed, his Boruch Shaim, the everlasting kingdom of Hashem, is the follow up of that introduction.

The entire year we are too humble, feeling too inadequate, to recite Boruch Shaim out loud. While Hashem's kingdom is referred to in Shema Yisroel, the word MALCHUS is not mentioned except in Boruch Shaim. Comes Yom Kippur, with atonement and forgiveness, we are encouraged to proclaim vociferously "Hashem is our King". We reach the apex of the process.

