**Two Types of Coronation**

**Based on a sicha by Harav Yehuda Amital *zt”l***

Translated by Kaeren Fish

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “…And say before Me on Rosh Ha-shana the *Malkhuyot, Zikhronot*, and *Shofarot: Malkhuyot* – so that you proclaim Me King over you.” (*Rosh Ha-shana* 16a)

This coronation on Rosh Ha-shana has two senses which are really one. There is a coronation of God in the realm of consciousness and faith, and a coronation that encompasses all of a person’s daily activities, both physical and spiritual. The coronation in the first sense is mentioned in the *Amida* of Rosh Ha-shana:

All who were made will know that You made them, and all who were formed will know that You formed them. And all that have breath in their mouth will say, “The Lord, God of Israel, is King, and His kingship has dominion over all.”

The exclusion of any territory, however small, from the realm of God’s dominion is not only a reduction of His sovereignty, but in fact heresy, Heaven forbid. God’s sovereignty encompasses every place, every time, and every event in the world. To coronate God in this sense requires a broad perspective, penetrating insight, and – most importantly – profound, burning faith.

Therefore, Rosh Ha-shana is first and foremost a day of faith, when the faith of each and every individual is examined. Faith stands at the center of all of the festivals, whether it is faith in the exodus from Egypt or faith in the revelation at Sinai. However, Rosh Ha-shana is different, because it is not about faith in a one-time event that reflects God’s intervention in history and His ability to change the laws of nature, but faith in God’s sovereignty. This means believing that His sovereignty is all-inclusive; it is boundless and infinite.

On this day we refresh our faith in God. Even though “no thought can grasp Him,” nevertheless, “no place is devoid of Him.” “Verily You are a God who hides Himself” (*Yeshayahu* 45:15), and the entire world – the heavens, the earth, and all that they contain – is nothing but a garment within which God conceals Himself. The heavens declare the glory of God, and He set the law and the times for the heavenly host, that they not deviate from their paths. It is God who created the heavenly host for the benefit of man – the greater and smaller stars, nearer and more distant, and all are happy to perform the will of their Creator. The sun, the moon, and the storm wind carry out His word; the mountains and every hill, the creeping things and the birds; concerning all of them the verse testifies, “You hide Your face – they are troubled…. You send forth Your breath – they are created” (*Tehillim* 104:29–30).

God’s sovereignty also includes the “kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth” (148:11). Among these, too, God’s name alone is exalted. It must be emphasized that even the “kings of the earth,” who seem to exercise the free will with which man is endowed – the heart of kings and princes is in God’s hands. The world is not left to the whims of a cruel despot or of twisted people of weak character with delusions of acting against God, whose sovereignty extends everywhere. “He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision” (2:4); if there is peace between God and Israel, He intervenes immediately to deliver them.

The other sense of coronating God on Rosh Ha-shana is our accepting the yoke of His sovereignty upon ourselves. Even within that sphere of autonomy that is given to man, in which he decides what is good and what is evil, he accepts the yoke of Heaven upon his every limb and sinew.

These two senses of accepting God’s sovereignty are connected to each other. On the one hand, without accepting the yoke of Heaven, one cannot achieve complete faith and recognition that God’s sovereignty is over all, without exception. On the other hand, knowledge of God and His unity is fundamentally bound up with correcting our behavior.

The verse reads, “Be still [literally, let go] and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (46:11). The Midrash comments: “The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: Let go of your evil deeds, ‘and know that I am God’” (*Shir Ha-shirim* *Rabba* 5:2). Knowing God requires the repair of our character traits and actions, and repairing our traits and actions leads to the revelation of God’s sovereignty in the world: “I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.” “The Lord, God of Israel, is King, and His kingship has dominion over all” – when the Holy One, blessed be He, is the God of Israel, then “His kingship has dominion over all.”

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On Rosh Ha-shana we pray, “Our God and God of our forefathers, reveal the glory of Your kingdom!” The “splendor of Your great might” is still concealed; it still seems to us that wickedness and the rule of tyranny control the world. “He stands and shakes the earth; He beholds, and releases the nations” (*Havakkuk* 3:5) – God released the nations and entrusted the role of revealing His sovereignty to the Jewish people. When we fully accept the yoke of His sovereignty, in fulfillment of the verse, “Therefore you are My witnesses, says the Lord, and I am God” (*Yeshayahu* 43:12), then the glory of His sovereignty will be revealed over the entire world. Israel is destined to be the heart of humanity, as Rabbi Yehuda Halevi teaches: “Israel among the nations is like the heart amongst the other organs” (*Kuzari* I:36). When we fulfill our destiny, then God’s sovereignty will encompass all of life: personal, public, and political.

It is because we were chosen to serve as the heart of the nations that we suffer more as a result of our sins. At the same time, however, we know that “we are put to death for Your sake all the day,” and we accept this with love. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi expresses this lofty and wondrous idea:

Do not consider it strange that it says, “Indeed, he has borne our sickness” (*Yeshayahu* 53:4), that we are in distress while the world is at rest. The troubles that befall us are meant to prove our faith, to cleanse us completely, and to remove all taint from us. Once cleansed and purified, the Divine Influence will infuse the world. (*Kuzari* I:44)

If we are worthy, we will fulfill the vision, “Behold, My servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high” (*Yeshayahu* 52:13), and “they will crown You, Lord our God, the angels, the multitudes of heaven, together with Your nation Israel, gathering here below.” What is demanded of us is not just to observe the 613 commandments, but to imitate God, as Rabbi Moshe Cordovero writes: “Therefore it is proper that one imitate the actions of the divine ‘Crown,’ which are the supreme Thirteen Attributes of Mercy” (*Tomer* *Devora*, ch. 1).

On this day, when God’s sovereignty over all is revealed, on this anniversary of the creation of the world, we are commanded to contemplate our actions and to know our obligations.

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In *Kiddush* *Levana* (sanctification of the new moon) we quote the Gemara in Sanhedrin (42a): “If Israel were allowed to greet the countenance of their Father in heaven only once a month – it would be enough for them.” If this is so concerning “greeting the countenance of their Father in heaven,” how much more fulfilling is this great day on which we are to see God’s sovereignty over all of creation.

The nations of the world flee from God’s dominion: “The Lord reigns – let the peoples tremble” (*Tehillim* 99:1). At first glance, this fear is surprising, since just two chapters previously we find, “The Lord reigns – let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad” (97:1). In fact, the nations see divine sovereignty as confining, so they flee. Out of fear of God, they submit themselves to all sorts of subjugation, they are full of fears, their hearts are closed. We, on the other hand, pray to God, “Place the fear of You,” and because we pray for the fear of God, we do not fear man: “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is my life’s strength, whom shall I dread?” (27:1).

On Yom Kippur we say:

Even though Your dread is upon the faithful angels,

the mighty heavenly hosts, created of ice,

mixed with fire – and Your awe is upon them.

Yet You desire praise from those formed from earth,

denizens of the valleys below, whose actions are meager

and good deeds few in number – and this is Your praise!

The Holy One, blessed be He, the fear of whom is upon all of creation, wants praise from the Jewish people, from those “whose actions are meager.” God is near to all those who call upon Him, and we – of “meager actions” – must coronate Him over ourselves and over the entire world.

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