**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**A River Flows from Eden:**

**The Garden of Eden as the Inner Source of the Jewish Holidays**

**Rav Uriel Eitam**

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Dedicated in memory of Rabbi Jack Sable z”l and

Ambassador Yehuda Avner z”l

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**Shiur#01: *Malkhuyot* -**

**The Nature of the Connection Renewed on Rosh Hashana**

**I**

**Rosh Hashana: The Day of God’s Coronation**

The crowning of God as king stands at the heart of Rosh Hashana. Even though there is no mention of this idea in the Torah, it plays a key role in the liturgy of the holiday. For all prayers of Rosh Hashana (and Yom Kippur), a long and special text that deals extensively with God's kingship is added to the third blessing of the *Amida* section, the *Ata Kadosh* blessing*.* The closing formula of the blessing, for every *Amida* recited during the Ten Days of Repentance from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur, is also different from the way the blessing concludes the rest of the year; instead of “*Ha-El ha-kadosh* (the holy God),” the blessing ends “*ha-melekh ha-kadosh* (the holy king)*.”*

The next blessing, the blessing that speaks of the sanctity of the day, ends with the kingship of God, joined to the idea of remembrance which is explicitly mentioned in the Torah: "king over all the earth, who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance (*Yom Ha-zikaron*)."

Finally, in the *Musaf* service, this blessing is expanded to become the first of the three special blessings of the day, namely, the *Malkhuyot* blessing. (*Malkhuyot* is the plural of *malkhut*, which can mean kingship or kingdom.)

The crowning of God as king on Rosh Hashana accords with the two well-known aspects of the day: it is both the first day of the year and also the day of judgment. The first day of the year is an appropriate time for the renewed coronation of God as king of the universe. The day on which God judges the entire world is equally fit for the crowning of God. The day of judgment can even be seen as a consequence of the manifestation of God's kingship, for one of the strongest expressions of a king's authority lies in the execution of justice: "The king by justice establishes the land" (*Mishlei* 29:4).[[1]](#footnote-1)

So too the blowing of the shofar , the special mitzvaassociated with the day, expresses the idea of God's coronation, as is evident from many verses, some of which appear in the third special blessing of *Musaf*, *Shofarot*.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**The Creation and the Coronation**

While some of the holidays are explicitly associated in the Torah with historical events, Rosh Hashana is not. In the Torah, it is referred to as “a day of blowing (*terua)*” (*Bamidbar* 29:1) and “a remembrance of blowing” (*Vayikra* 23:24), in the wake of which *Chazal* refer to the day in our liturgy as "the Day of Remembrance." Still, the meaning of that remembrance is not at all clear. The next *shiur*, which will deal with the second special blessing of *Musaf*, the *Zikhronot* blessing, will address this issue at length.

In this *shiur,* we will consider the meaning that connects Rosh Hashana to its earliest historical source: "This day is the beginning of your work, a remembrance of the first day" (as noted in the *Zikhronot* blessing). The "first day" mentioned here refers to the sixth day of Creation, the day on which the first human beings, Adam and Chava, are created.

This day, when Creation is completed with the fashioning of man, is the day on which God emerges as king of the world. The Gemara explains why *Tehillim* 93, which opens with the words, "The Lord reigns; He is clothed in majesty," is chosen as the psalm sung by the Levites in the Temple on Fridays:

On Friday they would recite: "The Lord reigns; He is clothed in majesty," because [on that day] He completed His work and reigned as king over them. (BT *Rosh Hashana* 31a)

According to this midrash, there is another reason why God's kingship plays such a central role on Rosh Hashana. Our Rosh Hashana commemorates the world's first Rosh Hashana — the day on which the work of creation is completed. Just as on the world's first Rosh Hashana, as soon as God completes the work of creation, He rules as king over the world, so too every Rosh Hashana, which corresponds to the day of creation, is suited to be a day on which God's kingship is revealed anew.

**Man Crowns God as King**

*Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* expands upon the idea of the emergence of God's kingship at the time of the completion of creation and deals with man's role in this process:

He [Adam] said to them [the other creatures]… Let's you and I go and adorn in majesty and might, and crown as king Him who created us, for the people crown the king as king, but the king does not crown himself as king if the people do not do so. Adam went and crowned [God] as king, with all the creatures following him, and he said: "The Lord reigns; He is clothed in majesty." (*Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 11)

This *midrash* adds certain fundamental elements. First of all, the process at the end of which God "reigned as king over them" is described here as a process that begins on Adam's initiative, executed by him. We are not dealing here merely with reigning as king, but with crowning as king. Man's first action is crowning God as king — immediately upon being created, Adam recognized God's greatness and understands that it is incumbent upon him to crown Him as king.[[3]](#footnote-3) Second, the *midrash* emphasizes the great importance of this coronation: there is no king without a people. Third, the *midrash* teaches that the first man crowns God as king not only over himself, but over all creatures. When Creation is completed with the fashioning of man, who is endowed with intellect, choice and leadership ability, it becomes possible for God to reveal Himself as king over all of creation.

These elements, as well, have parallels on Rosh Hashana. Rosh Hashana is not only the day on which God reigns as king, but the day on which we become active partners in His coronation, just like Adam. So too, in several places in the liturgy, it is explicitly stated that God's kingship in this world depends upon our coronation of Him as king.[[4]](#footnote-4) Finally, all year long we crown God as king over the people of Israel without appealing in obvious fashion to the rest of the world,[[5]](#footnote-5) but on Rosh Hashana we crown God as king over the entire world: "Reign over the entire world with Your glory… and they will say, everyone who has breath in his nostrils, the Lord, God of Israel, is King, and His kingship rules over all" (fourth blessing of the *Amida* of Rosh Hashana).

In summary, every year on Rosh Hashana, God is once again crowned as king, on the date on which God first reigned as king upon completion of the creation of the world. We perform this coronation in the same way that God was crowned as king by Adam, the first man.

**The King’s Command and Rebellion Against the King**

Kingship finds expression not **only** in the very proclamation and recognition of its existence. We cited earlier the verse "The king by justice establishes the land." A king legislates the laws of his kingdom, demands that they be observed, and examines whether or not they have actually been fulfilled. God's appearance as king also finds expression in laws and judgment, reward and punishment. After Adam is created, he is placed in the Garden of Eden in order to work and keep it, and he is commanded and forewarned:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. (*Bereishit* 2:16-17)

However, in the story of the Garden of Eden, it becomes clear that the fashioning of man brings with it not only God's kingdom and His commandments, but also the possibility of impairing that kingship and undermining God's status as king, as it were. The man's sin when he eats from the Tree of Knowledge involved not only a transgression of the king's command, but also a rebellion against His kingship.[[6]](#footnote-6)

To some extent, this sinful element is found in every transgression, for a violation of the king's command is tantamount to rebellion against His kingship. However, in the case of Adam's sin, this is even more pronounced. Adam receives a single commandment, which contains both positive and negative elements: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it." Since these are the only imperatives cast upon man, they may each be seen as bearing in particular the essential general charge of all positive and negative commandments: "Do what I command you to do, and refrain from doing what I forbid you to do."[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Rebellion Against God’s Kingship — The Root of Sin**

This is evident in even sharper fashion in the account of the seduction to sin. Adam's aim when he eats from the forbidden fruit is not only to enjoy its fine taste, but to achieve the result promised by the serpent: "And you shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (*Bereishit* 3:5). Both the desire to be as God in general and man's setting himself as arbiter of good and evil in particular clash with accepting God's kingship and give expression to man's casting away of God's yoke and his aspiration to be himself as God. If so, rebellion against God's kingship is not the consequence of Adam's sin; rather, it is the foundation and cause of all sin. The dimension of rebellion is intensified by the fact that Adam is in the Garden of Eden, in the king's palace, where God walks in the cool of the day right before him (*Bereishit* 3:8).

Adam undergoes a complete reversal. He begins by crowning God as king and ends by rebelling against this kingship and transgressing its commandments, because of a desire to be as God. This rebellion shapes man's basic position in the world and severs all of mankind, which descends from Adam, from God's kingdom.

**Repairing the Coronation**

In light of this point, we can better understand the meaning of our crowning God as king on Rosh Hashana. Rosh Hashana is the day of God's coronation not only because it is the first day of the year, and not only because the beginning of the year reflects the beginning of creation, but also because of the need to confront the crisis that accompanies this beginning, the crisis of rebelling against God's kingship. Adam crowns God as king, but also rebels against His kingship and detaches all of humanity from it.

The people of Israel are meant to repair the damage created by Adam's sin. Therefore, to repair that damage, every year on Rosh Hashana, we crown God as our own king and as king of the entire world. In this way, we annually remind all of humanity about God's kingship. Thus, we see how the crowning of God as king on Rosh Hashana stems from the story of Adam and repairs his sin.

**II**

**These Are the Generations of the Kingdom of God**

**Adam and His Sin**

We may now consider the broader picture of the relationship between God, King of the Universe, and humanity. The process of revealing God's kingship accompanies humanity from the beginning of its creation. The creation of the entire world ends with the fashioning of man, who immediately upon his creation crowns God as king of the world. God creates the Garden of Eden, where it becomes evident that God's kingship is the source of life filled with abundance. God places man in the garden so that he may be sustained by this blessed plenty. He breathes into his nostrils the breath of life, commands him to eat of the Tree of Life which bestows eternal life,[[8]](#footnote-8) and in that way He inscribes him, as it were, in the book of life.[[9]](#footnote-9)

However, the placement of man in the Garden of Eden has additional meaning. When God brings man into the Garden of Eden, He charges him with working and keeping it, thereby turning him into His partner. Thus, the garden becomes both an asset and an obligation for man.

This partnership has far-reaching significance. The Midrash indicates that, in effect, placing Adam in the Garden of Eden crowns him as king over all of earth's creatures:

The Holy One, blessed be He, thought to make him ruler in His world and king over all of His creatures. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I am king over the heavenly beings; you be king over the earthly beings. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He brought him into the Garden of Eden, and made him king there. (*Pesikta Rabbati*, Addition 1, Section 1)

Man is supposed to rule over earthly beings, while God rules over heavenly beings. This stands in contrast to the words of the serpent, who presents these two kingdoms as contradicting one another:

No creature walked erect except for man and the serpent, because both of them were kings… The difference between the two of them is that man, even though he walked erect and was similar to the king, accepted God upon himself as God, knelt before his king, and nullified his own kingdom before Him. (*Maharal*, *Netivot Olam*, *Netiv Ha-avoda*, Chap. 10)

Man’s destiny of eternal life is another expression of his partnership in the kingship of God.

The strength that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to the first man was forever… When he put aside the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, and went after the will of the serpent, 'You change his countenance, and send him away' (*Iyov* 14:29)" (*Bereishit Rabba* 16, 1).

The Midrash describes eternal life as an expression of man's strength (*tokef*), a term that is generally reserved for royalty.[[10]](#footnote-10) Man is destined for eternal life, which reflects his superior status in the eyes of the king.

Instead of following the living soul within him, which had been fit to be nourished from the Tree of Life of the king who desires life, the man follows the serpent, which incites him to rebel against the kingship of his God. The serpent, which feeds on dust, arouses the “dusty” side of man, created from the dust of the ground, and brings upon him the decree "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (*Bereishit* 3:19). In the wake of the words of the serpent, the man believes that God has been concealing and keeping the good from him and forbidding him to experience real life. He falls into the illusion that he is in competition with God, and he eats from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil into which, in his imagination, this competition has been distilled.

Adam exchanged true partnership for disassociation. This severance from the source of life leads to death: "For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (*Bereishit* 2:17), and in this way he loses the good and also his destiny. He loses the great privilege which is also a great obligation, and he is written in the book of the dead: "When he did not fulfill His command, he was immediately sentenced to death" (*Pesikta Rabbati*, ibid.)

**The People of Israel and the Torah**

At the time of the giving of the Torah, the people of Israel accept upon themselves God's *mitzvot*, by way of accepting His kingship:

This may be likened to a king of flesh and blood who entered a city.

His servants said to him: Issue decrees against them.

He said to them: No. When they accept my kingship I will issue decrees against them, for if they do not accept my kingship, they will not accept my edicts.

So God said to Israel: "I am the Lord your God who took you out from the land of Egypt from the house of bondage. [You shall have no other gods before Me]" (*Shemot* 20:2). (*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael*, *Ba-chodesh*, 6)

The sin of the first humans is repaired at the assembly at Mount Sinai: "When the serpent came upon Chava he injected a lust into her: [as for] the Israelites who stood at Mount Sinai, their lustfulness departed" (*Shabbat* 146a). From that time on, we are permitted to taste once again of the Tree of Life, the Torah.

In our context, the lust injected by the serpent is a sullying of the relationship between God and man, which changes from a deep connection to a hidden competition over power. Accepting God's kingship and Torah is fundamentally connected to the creation of a unique and exclusive relationship between the king and His people: "Then you shall be My own treasure from among all peoples; for all the earth is mine" (*Shemot* 19:5).

So too, the presentation of the king's identity at the beginning of the Ten Commandments emphasizes the concrete connection which has been already established between Him and the people: "I am the Lord your God, who took you out from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." When it is clear that the kingship is based on a deep connection, those who acknowledge the king may express their full trust and say: "We shall do and we shall hear"(*Shemot* 24:7).

This type of connection leads to slavery that contains freedom. Just as the giving of the Torah and its commandments begin with freedom, "I am the Lord your God who took you out from the land of Egypt from the house of bondage,” so too is the coronation of God executed by way of the shofar of freedom: "Crown him first as king, and afterwards seek mercy from Him so that He remember you. How so? With a shofar of freedom" (*Sifrei*, *Beha'alotekha* 19).

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi (*Shirei Rihal, Avdei Zeman*) expresses this idea as well: "Slaves of time are slaves of slaves; the slave of God, he alone is free."

**Every Year and in the Future**

Rosh Hashana is the day on which man was first created. On this day, he crowned God as king of the world, but later he ruined that coronation, annulling it with his sin after adopting the serpent's conception of kingship.

Every year, when we return to the first moment after creation, we once again crown God as king of the world with a full heart, recognizing the deep connection between us and Him. This coronation reaches a climax with the blowing of the shofar in the *Malkhuyot* blessing and with the conclusion of that blessing: "King over all the earth, who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance."

With this coronation, we abandon not only our sins against God's decrees, but also the distorted conception of God espoused by the serpent. We proclaim to the world that God is "a king who desires life," and we invoke "the living God" in our addition to the second blessing of the *Amida* for the Ten Days of Repentance.

Rosh Hashana is a day of return from the Tree of Knowledge to the Tree of Life, from detachment to the kingship of connection, and from the dust to the soul: "And they will say, everyone who has breath in his nostrils: The Lord, God of Israel, is king, and His kingship rules over all." As we plead for life, we expand our request from concern that is centered exclusively on our own existence, to a prayer that the abundance that will be bestowed upon us will itself enhance the manifestation of the kingship of God, in our addition to the second blessing of the *Amida* for the Ten Days of Repentance: "And inscribe us in the book of life, for Your sake, O living God."

From here we envision the future when the entire world will crown God as king: "And all shall come to serve You… and they will tender upon You the crown of kingship" (third blessing of *Musaf* of Rosh Hashana, *Chazarat Ha-shatz*). The final verse from the Prophets cited in *Malkhuyot* is thus: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall the Lord be one, and His name one" (*Zekharya* 14:9).

We will conclude this *shiur* with the concise and instructive words of Rabbi Chayim of Volozhin: "And our eyes see in the wording of the Rosh Hashana liturgy, that it is arranged from beginning to end only in connection with the glory of His kingdom, that it should be elevated as at first before the sin of the first man" (*Nefesh Ha-chayim* 2, 11).

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. See also the words of the Maharal of Prague: "The Holy One, blessed be He, is called king on the day of judgment, for as a consequence of His kingship applying to all creatures, they are judged" (*Chiddushei Aggadot* I, p. 103). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example: "The Lord his God is with him, and the shouting for the king (*teruat melekh*) is among them" (*Bamidbar* 23:21); "o clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord is most high, awe-inspiring; a great king over all the earth" (*Tehilim* 47:2-3); "With trumpets and sound of the horn shout you before the King, the Lord" *(Tehilim* 98:6). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The *midrash* there explains that immediately after the fashioning of man, the other creatures wish to bow down to him because they think that he has created them, and it is he who directs them to crown God as king. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See the words of the *Sefat Emet*: "In accordance with their acceptance of God's kingship, so the glory of His kingship reveals itself in the world" (Rosh Hashana 5647, s.v. *Be-inyan*). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. We crown God as king every day with our recitation of the *Shema*: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One," the term Israel refering to the people of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See also *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, which writes of Satan's attempt to cause Adam to sin: "And the Torah cried out and said: … The world was just created; is it time to rebel against God?" (*Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 13); and the *Zohar*: "Who rebelled against his master and transgressed His command" (*Zohar* I, 60b). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Rabbeinu Bachya (*Bereishit* 3:21): "It is well-known that the essence of the Torah is the positive and negative commandments. If so, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge that are fixed in the garden allude to the positive and negative commandments that are fixed in the Torah." [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. "Therefore it says: 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat' (*Bereishit* 2:16) – this is the Tree of Life from which the man should have eaten, for he only sinned with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, from which he was commanded not to eat" (*Zohar Chadash* I, 31b). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See the words of Moshe: "And if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written" (*Shemot* 32:32). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See, for example: "Then Ester the queen, the daughter of Avichayil, and Mordekhai the Jew, wrote down all the acts of power (*tokef*), to confirm this second letter of Purim" (*Ester* 9:29); "And he shall set his face to come with the strength (*tokef*) of his whole kingdom" (*Daniel* 11:17). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)