

King of kings – Shoftim

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כִּי תָבֹא אֶל הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ וּיְשַׁבְּתָהּ בָּהּ וְאַמְרָתָּ אֲשִׁמָּה
עָלַי מֶלֶךְ כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתַי. שׁוֹם תִּשָּׂים עָלַיךְ מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ מִקֶּרֶב
אֲחֵיךָ תִּשָּׂים עָלַיךְ מֶלֶךְ לֹא תֻכַּל לָתֵת עָלַיךְ אִישׁ נָכְרִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא אֲחִיךָ הוּא. (דברים יז, יד-טו)

In the Torah there is a concept (שמות כג, ב) *אֲחֵרֵי רַבִּים לְהִטּוֹת*, that in matters of doubt, we follow the majority opinion. From this it would seem that the preferred form of government in Am Yisrael, originally intended by HKB"H is ... a democracy. Nominate a few worthy candidates and elect whoever gets the majority vote.

However, this is not the case. In this week's parsha we read *שׁוֹם תִּשָּׂים* *הַלְכוֹת מַלְכִּים* (Rambam) *עָלַיךְ מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ* *הַלְכוֹת מַלְכִּים* (Rambam), *מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה* (ומלחמות א, א), *א* *מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה* ... chosen by *HKB"H*, not by democratic vote.

This would be the end of the shiur ... if not for the preceding passuk.

כִּי תָבֹא אֶל הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ וּיְשַׁבְּתָהּ בָּהּ וְאַמְרָתָּ אֲשִׁמָּה
עָלַי מֶלֶךְ כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתַי. When you get to Eretz Yisrael that HKB"H has given you as an inheritance and you settle there *and you say* "I will appoint a king over me, like all the nations around me!" From this passuk, it seems that appointing a king is *not* *לְכַתְּחֵלָה*, *not* HKB"H's first choice. It seems that HKB"H is *responding* *עָלַיךְ מֶלֶךְ שׁוֹם תִּשָּׂים* *only because Am Yisrael initiated the request!* If Am Yisrael would not have asked, perhaps HKB"H would not have commanded them to appoint a king? That would make it *בְּדִיעָבָד* and not *לְכַתְּחֵלָה*?

This is actually a machloket Tannaim in the Gemara (ע"ב, סנהדרין כ).

R' Yehuda says that it is a *מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה*, to appoint a king *ג' מִצְוֹת נִצְטוּ* *יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַנִּיסָתָן לָאֶרֶץ לְהַעֲמִיד לָהֶם מֶלֶךְ וּלְהַכְרִית זֶרְעוֹ שֶׁל עַמְלֶק וּלְבָנוֹת לָהֶם בֵּית הַבְּחִירָה*. According to R' Yehuda, appointing a king over Am Yisrael was HKB"H's original plan and therefore it is a *לְכַתְּחֵלָה*.

R' Nehorai says that this passuk *עָלַיךְ מֶלֶךְ שׁוֹם תִּשָּׂים* was only in response to Am Yisrael's complaint *לֹא נִאֲמָרָה פֶּרֶשָׁה זֹאת אֶלָּא כִּנְגִיד תִּרְעוּמָתָן*. According to R' Nehorai, this is not a mitzva at all, but is instead a *בְּדִיעָבָד* "solution" to an imperfect situation.

It is very easy to understand R' Nehorai's reasoning. If it was a מצות עשה, to appoint a king when Am Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael and settled there (after conquering it from the seven nations), they would have *immediately* performed this מצות עשה and appointed a king. Instead, they waited many generations of the Shoftim, about 328 years, until they asked Shmuel Hanavi to appoint a king. And what was Shmuel's response to such a request? It was *negative* in the extreme (ו, ח, ט) (שמואל א ח, ו) ... לשפוטנו.

So, Shmuel davened to HKB"H to ask Him what to do. HKB"H's response ויאמר ה' אל שמואל שמע בקול העם לכל אשר יאמרו אליך כי לא אתך מאסו כי אתי - HKB"H tells Shmuel to acquiesce to Am Yisrael's request, but it seems that HKB"H is also upset with the request. This seems *clear proof* that R' Nehorai's shita is correct – HKB"H *Himself* says He is not happy with the request, but, since they already asked – go ahead and appoint a king. a בדיעבד "solution" to an imperfect situation.

That is on the one hand. On the other hand, R' Yehuda's reasoning also seems correct.

In a previous shiur ([Balak 2025](#)) we explored why Avraham made so much effort to rescue his wayward nephew Lot – it was to ensure the birth of Moav, Rut and David HaMelech.

In the story of Yosef and his brothers Yosef has dreams of monarchy to which his brothers angrily respond ויאמרו לו אחיו המלך תמלך עלינו אם משול תמשל בנו ויוספו עוד שנא אתו על חלמתיו ועל דבריו (בראשית לו, ח) שפבר באה להם הקבלה כי יהודה מלך על כולם ואיך יבא HaChaim (ibid.) says, החזיון להפך קבלה אמתית, that the brothers already had prophecies that Yehuda was to be king, not Yosef. They regarded Yosef as מורד במלכות and that is why they planned to execute him, but in the end sold him into slavery.

When Yaakov blesses his sons, what is the blessing given to Yehuda? יהודה אתה יודוך אחיך ידך בערף איביך שיתחוו לך בני אביך. גור אריה יהודה מטרף בני עליה פרע רבץ כאריה וכלביא מי יקימנו. לא יסור שבט מיהודה ומחזק מבין רגליו עד כי יבא שילה ולו יקהת עמים. (בראשית מט, ח-י)

This is clear reference to R' Yehuda's three mitzvot in the Gemara –

1. "ידך בערף איביך" = להכרית זרעו של עמלק.
2. "פרע רבץ כאריה" = לבנות להם בית הבחירה (the Heichal resembled a crouching lion)
3. "לא יסור שבט מיהודה ומחזק מבין רגליו" = להעמיד להם מלך.

From this it is clear that appointing a king was something planned – ordained even before Creation of the world. The Gemara (פסחים נד, ע"א) says שְׁבַע דְּבָרִים נִבְרְאוּ קֹדָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא הָעוֹלָם וְאֵלוּ הֵן תּוֹרָה וּתְשׁוּבָה וְגוֹן עֵדוּן וְגִיּוֹנָם וְכִסֵּא הַכְּבוֹד וּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְשֵׁמוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה.

Both R' Yehuda and R' Nehorai are right! So, who is *more* right? The Rambam paskens לְמַעֲשֵׂה הַלָּכָה like R' Yehuda –

שֶׁלֹש מִצְוֹת נִצְטְווּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשַׁעַת כְּנִיסַתוֹ לְאֶרֶץ לְמִנּוֹת לָהֶם מֶלֶךְ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר שׁוּם תַּשִּׁים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ וְלִהְיוֹת זֶרְעוֹ שֶׁל עַמְּלֵק שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר תִּמְחָה אֶת זֶכֶר עַמְּלֵק וְלִבְנוֹת בֵּית הַבְּחִירָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר לְשָׁכְנוּ תִּדְרֹשׁוּ וּבָאתָ שָׁמָּה. (הלכות מלכים ומלחמות א, א)

The Rambam himself addresses the shita of R' Nehorai that it appears that Shmuel Hanavi and HKB"H were not happy with the request and says לָמָּה לֹא רָצָה הַקֹּב"ה כְּשֶׁשָּׁאֲלוּ מֶלֶךְ מִשְׁמוּאֵל לָפִי שֶׁשָּׁאֲלוּ בְּתַרְעוּמָת וְלֹא שֶׁאֲלוּ לְקִיּוּם הַמִּצְוָה אֶלָּא מִפְּנֵי שֶׁקָּצוּ בְּשִׁמוּאֵל הַנָּבִיא (הלכות מלכים ומלחמות א, ב). According to the Rambam, it was not the request itself that was problematic, but the way it was presented, not to perform the mitzva but to make a slur against Shmuel.

From this it is quite clear that the mitzva to appoint a king is a מִצְוָה דְּאוֹרֵינָא and that *it follows an initiative from Am Yisrael*. Am Yisrael need to come to the realization that a king is necessary and when they do – *that* is when the time is ripe to appoint the king, not before.

Many of the Mefarshim disagree with the Rambam (Sforno, Ibn Ezra, Abravanel, etc.) and say that appointing a king is either optional or a בְּדִיעֻבָּד solution to an imperfect situation. The Abravanel takes it as far as to say that appointing a king is a bad system of government that invites corruption.

In this shiur, I would like to present a different view that reconciles all the Mefarshim above.

There is no question that HKB"H planned that there would be a king in Am Yisrael, because He already defined the name of that king (Mashiach) before Creation. There is also no question that Yehuda was ordained as the tribe from which this king would emerge. There is similarly no question that this king would be descended from David HaMelech. The *entirety of history* was working towards the birth of David HaMelech (re: Avraham and Lot, etc.).

There is only one question – timing! How long does it take for this king to appear?

The Torah is telling us that *before* appointing a king – the ordained king - an initiative has to *first* come from Am Yisrael, וְאֶמְרַת אֲשִׁימָה עָלַי מֶלֶךְ כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם, אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבָתִי.

Many Mefarshim interpret this phrase "כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתַי" in a derogatory sense. To them it appears that Am Yisrael's claim in this passuk is that they desire to be *like all the other nations around them*. HKB"H told us in a prophecy (through Bilam) עַם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן – we are *not* like the other nations. How can we ask to be like the other nations?

I believe that this is not what Am Yisrael are asking at all.

In order for the ordained king to appear to lead Am Yisrael, there first has to be the infrastructure. This infrastructure is based on the fundamental principle "כָּכֹל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתַי". When we fully apply this principle, the time will be ripe for the ordained king to appear in Am Yisrael.

The gematria of "כָּכַל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתָי" is - בְּזַעַת אֶפֶיךָ תֹאכַל לָחֶם (בראשית ג, יט), the punishment of Adam HaRishon. What was the essence of Adam HaRishon's sin? It was lack of gratitude, that Adam HaRishon was not שָׂמַח בְּחֶלְקוֹ. He was not content with what HKB"H gave him and felt it necessary to "steal" something that was not his. In order for the ordained king to emerge, Am Yisrael in its entirety need to be שָׂמַח בְּחֶלְקוֹ.

What was the cataclysm of Yosef and the brothers? It was an inherent insecurity of the brothers regarding their purpose in life. They misunderstood the function they each had to play in the future Am Yisrael and as such perceived Yosef as a threat to them and their roles. They could not conceive that Yosef had his own unique role and function that was *not* a contradiction to theirs. The gematria of "כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתָי" – י"א – אֵיזֶהוּ עֲשִׂיר הַשְּׁמִיחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ, is the eleven brothers were complicit in Yosef being sold to slavery in Egypt (even Binyamin, through his silence). This is why the Ketoret has eleven ingredients, it is כִּפָּרָה for this sin. The prerequisite to the appearance of the ordained king, is that the eleven tribes are שְׁמִיחִים בְּחֻלְקָם to such a degree that they will accept the king from the tribe of Yehuda unquestioningly.

When Am Yisrael were redeemed from Egypt, they crossed over Yam Suf, each tribe in their own unique lane, performing their allotted function in Am Yisrael, cognizant of the other tribes alongside them. This miracle was immortalized in Shirat HaYam, the gematria of "כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבְתֶּי" is – נְחִיתָ בְּחֶסֶדֶד עִם זֵו גְּאֻלָּתְ (שמות טו, יג) וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הָהָר (שמות יט), This is what facilitated Am Yisrael camping as one, in perfect unity, at the foot of Har Sinai, מִלֵּךְ אֶחָד - כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבְתִי וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הָהָר (ב. The gematria of הָהָר נֶגֶד יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁם is 1000).

Perfect achdut in Am Yisrael is the awareness that the one cannot exist without the other. If you take the five individual fingers in a hand, on their own they are weak. However, if you combine all five into a sixth, *consolidated* entity, they become the most powerful force. The gematria of "כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתַי" is יד – זרת – זרת, קמיצה, אמה, אצבע, אגודל. This is why the Lechem HaPanim on the

Shulchan in two stacks of six represent perfect unity. To hold up six fingers, one hand is insufficient, you need one finger from the other hand to complete the six. This is the vav hachibur. The configuration of the twelve Lechem HaPanim on the Shulchan represents the interdependence of the tribes.

Even if all twelve tribes have a different role and purpose, as long as they all speak with a *single* language and work together towards a *singular* common goal, they are fulfilling their destiny, like the twelve brothers declared to Yaakov before he died (דברים ו, ד) שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד (דברים ו, ד). The gematria of "כָּכָל" (כולל) is שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד (with the לל) is - הגוים אשר סביבתי

When Am Yisrael reaches the required maturity that they embody *all* the above principles of "כָּכָל הגוים אשר סביבתי" - then and *only then* can they take the initiative and ask HKB"H to appoint a king over them. If they jump the gun and prematurely ask for a king before they have reached the required maturity, this leads to all the negative things mentioned in sefer Shmuel and that the Mefarshim (re: Abravanel, Sforino, Ibn Ezra, etc.) described. It leads to corruption, disunity, civil war and destruction. The opinion of R' Nehorai in the Gemara is not wrong, it is simply indicative of prematurity.

Preceding the emergence of this ordained king, many nations will gather against us and subjugate us. The gematria of "כָּכָל הגוים אשר סביבתי" is - וְעַתָּה (יא) נֶאֱסָפוּ עֲלֵינוּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים (מיכה ד, יא). The lengthy galut will allow Am Yisrael to acquire the maturity to do teshuva. The gematria of "כָּכָל הגוים אשר סביבתי" is - וּמִצַּאתָ אֶת לְבָבוֹ נֶאֱמָן (נחמיה ט, ח).

When Am Yisrael reach the required maturity, the ordained king will emerge, the מֶלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ. This king will embody the principle of "כָּכָל הגוים אשר סביבתי". This king will encompass the wisdom that HKB"H gave to all the other nations around us, *combined* with all the wisdom of the Torah that HKB"H gave to Am Yisrael. This king will restore the wisdom of Edom to its rightful source. The gematria of "כָּכָל הגוים אשר סביבתי" is - אִישׁ יָדַע צִיד אִישׁ שָׂדֶה (איש ידע ציד איש שדה) and also אִישׁ יִמְיֶנֶךָ ... בֶּן אָדָם אֲמַצְתָּ לָּךְ (תהילים פ, יח). Rashi (ibid.) says this is referring to Eisav who HKB"H will take retribution from and restore it to the rightful son, Am Yisrael.

The Rambam says that the appointment of this ordained king precedes the war with Amalek (הלכות מלכים ומלחמות א, ב). The gematria of "כָּכָל הגוים אשר סביבתי" is - בָּחַר לָנוּ אֲנָשִׁים וְצֵא הַלָּחֶם בְּעֶמְלֶק (שמות יז, ט).

Following the war with Amalek, this king will rebuild the Beit HaMikdash. The gematria of "כָּכָל הגוים אשר סביבתי" is - בָּזֹאת יָבֹא אֶהְרֹן אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ (ויקרא ג, טז).

Finally, the era of Geulah will commence. The gematria of "כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם" is - אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבָתִי" and שְׁנוֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ - שְׁלֹטוֹן אַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים.

Right now, as we speak, Am Yisrael has not yet reached this maturity. We are all still "individual fingers", poking each other in the proverbial eye. We are still embroiled in the "democratic" mindset of the goyim and not in the monarchy mindset of HKB"H and His מֶלֶךְ הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

We are fast approaching a new set of national elections in Israel, which I prefer to refer to as "national psychosis", primarily because this is not the natural form of government for Am Yisrael and also because it in no form resembles the democracy it is supposed to idolize. Any resemblance between the Israeli elections and democracy is purely coincidental.

This period is perhaps the most critical for Am Yisrael, because right now we are at our weakest, most vulnerable and most divided.

What can each of us do in such challenging times? Firstly, daven to HKB"H to help us. Secondly, be מְרַבֵּה in acts of kindness and chessed towards our fellow Jews, regardless which sector they belong to. Thirdly, stay as far away from the media and the hate as possible and spend the "freed up" time strengthening family bonds. The gematria of "כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבָתִי" is - עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתְאַחֵד בְּאַהֲבָה.

Finally, and most importantly, thank HKB"H for everything He has given us and be grateful. Try to apply as many of the principles listed in this shiur as we can and perhaps that little mitzva we each do will be the tipping point that will allow HKB"H to hasten the arrival of the Geulah and מֶלֶךְ הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

Shabbat Shalom

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