

Hashem shall reign for all eternity. (15:18)

Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl, observes that, from Adam *HaRishon* to Noach and on to the *Avos*, Patriarchs and the *Shevatim*, Tribes, never does the Torah use the term *melech*, king. The first time we “meet” Hashem as *Melech* is at the end of *Shiras HaYam*, when *Bnei Yisrael* declare: Hashem *Yimloch l’olam va’ed*, “Hashem shall reign for all eternity.” An unwritten rule is that the first time a term appears in *Tanach*, it becomes the source that defines that term. We see this idea in a number of places. *Chazal* (*Berachos 7b*), “From the time of Creation until Avraham *Avinu* – no one called/referred to Hashem as *Adon*, Master, until our Patriarch did so: *Va’yomar Ado’nai, Elokim, ba’mah eida ki irashenah*, “My Lord, Hashem *Elokim*, whereby shall I know that I am to inherit it?” (*Bereishis 15:8*). Avraham *Avinu* revealed a *hanhagah*, conduct, of Hashem that ascribes to *Adon*, Master. Having said this, we must endeavor to understand the term *melech* and how it applies to *Krias Yam Suf*.

Chazal (*Shemos Rabbah 23:4*) teach, “From the beginning of Creation until the time *Klal Yisrael* stood at the *Yam Suf*, we do not find anyone who sang *shirah* to Hashem until the Jewish People did.” This *Midrash* informs us that the praise known as *shirah*, song, was initiated after the Splitting of the Red Sea. Prior to this august moment, the praise of *shirah* had been unknown/uninitiated. With this in mind, *Rav Heyman* suggests that a relationship exists between the term and the concept of *shirah*, indicating that something extraordinary and innovative occurred, which resulted in the term *melech/king* being introduced in the seminal *shirah*. What event brought *Klal Yisrael* to the realization that Hashem was the *Melech Malchei HaMelachim*, King of Kings?

Rav Heyman explains that, prior to the Splitting of the Sea, a debate ensued between the *Malachei Ha’Shaareis*, Ministering Angels, and Hashem with regard to drowning the Egyptians while simultaneously sparing the Jews. It was not as if the Jews were without sin. *Hallalu ovdei avodah zarah, v’hallalu ovdei avodah zarah*, “These (the Egyptians) are idol worshippers, and these (the Jews) are also idol worshippers.” What made one superior to the other?

At that moment Hashem made a “royal” decision: The Jews would be spared, while the Egyptians would receive their due punishment. What about the accusations against the Jews? Why should they come out in a better position when, in fact, they were culpable for idol worship? This is where the *hanhagah* of *malchus*, monarchy, comes in. A king can do what he wants. He does not have to answer to anyone, nor does he have to rationalize his decisions. He rules.

Perhaps we may take this idea a step further. *Chazal* refer to *Klal Yisrael* as *bnei melachim*, princes, the chosen sons of the *Melech Malchei HaMelachim*. As such, we do not have to offer reasons for our religious conduct, our spiritual demeanor, our mode of dress or the way we live our lives. This, of course, does not in any way mean that we are free to do as we please. It does mean, however, that we live with a deep-rooted sense of pride in who we are and in Whom and what we believe. What will people say when: we dress differently; act differently; raise our children differently? As *bnei Melech*, we are not obliged to explain ourselves. As long as we are good,

ethical and friendly citizens, we live our lives and answer to one Authority: Hashem.