

**Malchiot & Aleinu - Likrat Rosh Hashana - 5768**

We are so accustomed to saying "Aleinu" at the conclusion of "dovening" – that we are often caught by surprise on Rosh ha'Shana – when we find it in the middle of "shmone-esrey"!

Truth be told, our custom to say "Aleinu" every day only began about 600-700 years ago (approx. 14th century), while "Aleinu" as part of Musaf on Rosh ha'Shana has been our custom for almost two thousand years (since the time of the Amora 'Rav' / and some sources claim since the time of Yehosha bin Nun!).

In the following shiur, we explain how Aleinu forms the introduction to the "malchiot" section of Musaf. Based on that explanation we will suggest a reason for why it has been added as a conclusion to our daily prayers.

**INTRODUCTION**

Three special blessings are added to Musaf on Rosh ha'shana – "malchiot", "zichronot", and "shofrot"; and after each of these blessings, we blow the shofar. Each section follows the same format:

- \* An opening "piyut", introducing the topic -
- \* Ten psukim / 3 from Torah, 3 from Tehillim, 3 from Neviim,
- \* A concluding pasuk leading into the closing blessing
- \* "chatima" - a short prayer concluding with the "bracha"
- \* Tekiat Shofar

As "Aleinu" serves as the opening "piyut" for the "malchiot" section, our study of its theme will help us appreciate what "malchiot" is all about.

Let's begin by taking a careful look at its opening two lines:

עֲלֵינוּ לְשִׁבַּח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל  
 לְתַת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית  
 שְׁלֹא עָשָׂנוּ כְּגוֹיֵי הָאָרְצוֹת  
 וְלֹא שָׁמְנוּ כְּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה

As you read this opening section, pay attention how you translate the "shin" in "sh'lo asanu...". In other words, did you translate this phrase beginning with the word **'that'** or **'because'**?

Confused? Let's explain the difference between these two possibilities:

The opening line of Aleinu states that it is **our duty** to praise [God] the master of everything... of all Creation. Then we continue by saying "[for] He did not make us like the other nations, nor did He make our portion like theirs..." - but this second line can be understood in one of two ways: Either it explains:

- a) **how** we praise Him – [modifying "I'shabeyach"]
- or
- b) **why** it is **our duty** to praise Him [modifying "aleinu"]

If it explains **how** we praise Him, then in essence we begin "malchiot" by praising God (i.e. thanking Him) for not making us gentiles; if so, the "shin" of "sh'lo asanu" would be translated as 'that'.

If it explains **why** it is our duty to praise God, then we begin "malchiot" by explaining why it is OUR duty to sing God's praise - i.e. for it was for that very reason that God chose us and did not make us like the other nations. If so, the "shin" would be translated as **'because'**.

To demonstrate why this latter explanation makes more sense, let's differentiate between 'praise' and 'thanks'. 'Praise' ["shevach"] relates to how great someone is in the absolute

sense, while 'thanks' ["hodaya"] is relative, for it relates to how kind or helpful someone has been to you.

Therefore, if one was instructed to praise God, the best example would be a statement concerning His power, or the fact that He is the Creator of heaven and earth. However, that fact that He did not make us like the other nations would not fall under the category of His greatness, rather it would be an example of something we would need to thank God for.

As the opening statement of Aleinu states that is our duty to **praise** God - "I'shabayach", it would not make sense to bring an example of praise from something that would fall under the category of 'thanks'. Rather, it makes more sense that we first explain WHY it is our duty - i.e. why He chose us. Afterward, in the next sentence, we begin our actual praise of God:

שְׁהוּא נוֹטָה שְׁמַיִם וְיוֹסֵד אֶרֶץ וּמוֹשֵׁב יְקָרוּ בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל  
 וְשׁוֹכֵנֵת עֲזוֹ בְּגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִים - הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵין עוֹד: אָמֵת  
 מִלְּכָנוּ אָפֶס זֹלָתָנוּ...

Note how this section clearly forms a 'praise of God' – for it explains how God is "yotzer breishit" [for he formed the heavens and earth], and how He is "adon ha'kol" [for the throne of His Glory is high up in Heaven].

Thus, it would be logical to assume that the earlier phrase of "sh'lo asanu" explains why it is OUR DUTY to praise Him, while the "sh'hu noteh shamayim" explains how we praise Him.

[Furthermore, if the "sh'lo asanu" is the praise itself, it would make more sense to say 'aleinu l'hodot' – we should **thank him** for not making us gentiles, not "aleinu l'shabayach".]

If our understanding is correct, then the opening statement of Aleinu becomes quite significant – and helps us better understand what "malchiot" is all about. The accent is on the **"aleinu"** – it is OUR DUTY to praise God; as it was for this purpose that He chose us. Hence, "malchiot" is not simply our own recognition that God is King, but more so our realization that it is our duty and responsibility to bring the message of God's Kingdom to all mankind – by keeping His mitzvot.

However, the manner by which we bring that message is not through force or coercion. Rather, by setting an example, as God's model nation – following His laws, acting in a just and kind manner, and singing God's praises at every opportunity. By properly keeping God's mitzvot, the people of Israel can facilitate the recognition of God by all mankind.

And that is what "malchiot" is all about. To support this, let's take a look at the next paragraph of Aleinu.

**V'AL KEIN N'KAVEH - WHAT WE ARE HOPING FOR**

Note how this section expresses our hope that the **goal** of our praising of God will be achieved:

עַל בֶּן נְקוּהָ לָדָה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ-  
 לְרֵאוֹת מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאֵרֶת עֲדָה  
 לְהַעֲבִיר גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וְהַאֲלִילִים כְּרוֹת יִכְרְתוּן לְתַקּוֹן  
 עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שְׁדֵי,  
 וְכָל בְּנֵי בְּשָׂר יִקְרְאוּ בְּשִׁמְךָ  
 לְהַפְנוֹת אֱלֹהִים כָּל רִשְׁעֵי אֶרֶץ...

Our stated **hope** is that through our praise of God - other nations will abandon idol worship, thus 'fixing' the world with God's Kingdom, ["I'tikeyn olam..."] and all mankind will call out in God's Name, and the wicked will abandon their evil ways.

יִכְרְוּ וְיִדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל  
 כִּי לָךְ תִּכְרַע כָּל בָּרֶךְ תִּשְׁבַּע כָּל לְשׁוֹן,  
 לְפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִכְרְעוּ וַיִּפְלוּ  
 וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ יִקְרְאוּ יִתְנוּ  
 וַיִּקְבְּלוּ כָּלֵם אֶת עַל מַלְכוּתֶךָ...

Note as well how in the first paragraph of Aleinu, **only** Am Yisrael was bowing down to God; but now - all mankind has reached the same conclusion. On Rosh ha'Shana, we are the first nation to accept God's Kingdom, but we express our hope that our singing of God's praises will facilitate the acceptance of His Kingdom over all mankind.

### SHMA YISRAEL

This section is followed by our quote of the ten psukim that discuss God's Kingdom. However, note that the final pasuk that we quote for "malchiot" - the famous pasuk of "shma yisrael" - does not include the word "melech".

**וּבְתוֹרַתְךָ כְּתוּב לֵאמֹר שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד:**

Even though this pausk does not include the word "melech" Chazal understand it as a statement of "kabalat ol malchut shamayam" - accepting the yoke of Heaven, which is the essence of "malchiot". Let's explain why.

By comparing Devarim 6:4 (the source in Chumash for shema) with Devarim 5:2 (that Hashem Elokeinu made a 'covenant' with us at Har Sinai) and its context, this statement of "Hashem Elokeinu" implies that Hashem is not only our God, but more so our 'boss'. Then we state "Hashem echad", that the same God who is our 'boss' (and covenantal partner) is actually the one and only God. In other words, the God that we are working for (hence representing Him by keeping His mitzvot) - is not only our personal God, but He is the God of all mankind, and His reputation is resting on our shoulders.

In other words, reciting the "shema" is not simply a statement recognizing God's existence; rather it forms a 'pledge of allegiance' - a recognition that the Jewish people were chosen to serve God [by keeping His mitzvot], and that God's reputation is resting on their shoulders. [Hence - "kabalat ol malchut shamayim".]

The recognition of this responsibility, is the most fundamental point of "malchiot", and is expressed more explicitly in the "chatima" - the concluding blessing - of the "malchiot" section.

### MLOCH AL KOL HA"OLAM KULO B"KVODECHA

Note how the opening lines of this prayer reflect this very theme. First we express our hope that God's Kingdom will indeed be accepted by all mankind:

**אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מְלֻךְ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ בְּכַבֻּדְךָ,  
וְהַנְּשֵׂא עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בִּיקְרָךְ, וְהוֹפֵעַ בְּהַדָּר גָּאוֹן עֲזֵךְ עַל כָּל  
יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל אֲרֻצֶּיךָ, וַיִּדַע כָּל פֶּעוּל כִּי אַתָּה פְּעַלְתָּ וַיִּבֶן כָּל  
יְצוּר כִּי אַתָּה יַצַּרְתָּ...  
... יצור כי אתה יצרתו...**

Then we explain how this all relates to us:

**וַיֹּאמֶר כָּל אִשָּׁר נִשְׁמָה בְּאָפּוֹ:**

**ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלֻךְ וּמְלֻכוֹתוֹ בְּכָל מְשָׁלָה:**

Every living person will recognize that Hashem - the God of Israel - i.e. the God that the Jewish People are talking about and praising all the time - He indeed is the King.

But how will this happen?

**קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וְתֵן חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרַתְךָ...  
וְטַהַר לִבֵּנוּ לְעִבְדֶּךָ בְּאַמֶּת,**

We pray that God will continue to sanctify us, by our keeping of His mitzvot and our following the laws of His Torah ["kad'sheinu b'mitzvotecha v'ten chelkeinu b'torateicha"] – and that God should help purify our hearts so that we can serve Him in truth.

This prayer enables us to recite the blessing of "malchiot" - that He is King over the entire Land - who has sanctified the people of Israel [to serve Him] just as He has sanctified "yom ha'zikaron" - this special day of remembering.

We pray that God remembers His People; for that to happen, we must remember our purpose.

### FROM ROSH HA'SHANA to EVERY DAY

If our interpretation is correct, then the prayer of "Aleinu" is not simply a praise of God, rather it forms a beautiful 'mission statement' - an explanation of what the nation of Israel is all about, and why we were chosen by God to sing His praises and serve Him.

As "Aleinu" expresses our goals and aspirations, it also forms a very meaningful prayer to recite every day upon the completion of our regular "tefila". Before we leave the synagogue, it forms an excellent reminder and guideline for how we should act when we leave 'shul' and embark upon our daily endeavors.

May our prayers on this Rosh ha'Shana be answered, and may God's goal for His People be fulfilled –

Wishing everyone a shana tova &  
ketiva v'chatima tova  
menachem