

A TIME OF INTROSPECTION

by Rabbi Dovid Green

I remember once hearing a tape of a modern-day philosopher named Alan Watts criticizing what he termed the "western Judeo-Christian concept of G-d. He spoke about a G-d who stands around recording every one's sins, and never has any time to enjoy His creation. "No time to walk in the park, no time to look at the stars, arghhhh." An understanding of what the Torah teaches us about the nature of G-d demonstrates Mr. Watt's ignorance of the subject. To our chagrin, Mr. Watt's perception is the popular one, and agreeably is not a G-d anyone would want to embrace.

The true Torah perspective can be derived through an understanding of what Rosh HaShana is about. Rosh HaShana literally means "the head of the year", meaning the beginning. Rosh HaShana is known as "The Day of Judgement". It is also the anniversary of the day that G-d created mankind, corresponding to the 6th day of creation. A repeating theme in the liturgy of Rosh HaShana is the acceptance of G-d as king of the universe. This is also borne out from the fact that G-d created mankind on this day. Man is the only creature with the free will to submit to a king. When G-d created mankind, His kingdom was established in the sense of having subjects who accept His dominion over them.

Since Rosh HaShana is the anniversary, the establishment of G-d's kingdom repeats itself every year on this day. Every year brings the creation closer to the realization of the purpose for which G-d created it. Every year, G-d reviews the creation as a whole, and every aspect of creation individually. Every year G-d decrees the events which lead creation in its direction toward fulfilling its purpose. This is where the idea of judgement comes in. G-d carefully inventories the entire creation to see that it did its part in fulfilling the ultimate purpose. Adjustments are made in all aspects to keep everything in the correct direction. Mankind is the only aspect of creation which chooses whether or not to contribute to this cause, although he can't really prevent it from coming about. G-d decrees for him what he needs for the new cycle to realize his hidden potential.

This is what makes Rosh HaShana a serious day. The entire year is decided on this day. Every event that will take place, be it for good or otherwise, on a large-scale basis, and conversely, on an individual basis, is decreed.

This is why Rosh HaShana-time is a season of introspection. It's a time to consider what we have or have not done to further G-d's cause. If necessary, we can voluntarily make corrections by changing direction for the future. In that case, we don't need any further "convincing". Needless to say, the

process must be serious and sincere, not some silly new year's resolutions to discuss at social gatherings.

One very significant way to show our commitment to G-d's cause is through the study of Torah. Each one on his own level can dedicate time to learning the scriptures with the classic commentaries, many which are now available in translations in a very understandable english. There are books of Mishnah and Talmud, comprising the Oral Law, and books regarding all aspects of halacha, laws of the Torah. It is almost a guarantee that one who commits to learning will improve himself. Let us all consider this at this time, and thereby show G-d that we align ourselves with Him. Through this gesture may we all be signed and sealed for a good and sweet year.

Good Shabbos and Good Yom Tov.

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