

Crowning God (*Ki Tavo*)

If you look up the meaning the word ‘Emirate’, you will find that this word describes a country or region that is ruled by an ‘Emir’ - which is the Arabic term for a prince, commander, or monarch.

Perhaps this may seem to be a strange way to begin a *Dvar Torah*. However, knowing the meaning of this word actually helps reveal the deeper meaning of two curious phrases in our parsha.

We shall begin by noting that *Parshat Ki Tavo* is read in the weeks immediately leading up to *Rosh Hashanah*, and that the word ‘*Hayom*’ appears on 14 occasions in *Parshat Ki Tavo* – with this word featuring in three consecutive verses (*Devarim* 26:16-18) which read as follows:

‘(16) The Lord your God is commanding you this day (Hayom) to keep these decrees and laws. Take care to keep them with all your heart and with all your soul. (17) Today (Hayom) you have proclaimed (He’emarta) the Lord to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways, keep His decrees, commandments, and laws, and listen to His voice. (18) And today (Hayom) the Lord has proclaimed (He’emir’cha) you to be, as He promised you, His treasured people who guard His commands.’

As should be clear, these three verses exquisitely capture the mission of the Jew: **to faithfully accept God, to follow the Torah, to walk in God’s ways, and to be God’s loyal and treasured people.** Yet embedded in these verses is a further message.

We have a tradition, as recorded in the *Zohar* (*Parshat Bo* & *Parshat Pinchas*), and as derived from *Iyov* 1:6 and *Melachim* II 4:11, that the phrase ‘*Vayehi Hayom*’ refers to *Rosh Hashanah*, and this has prompted some commentaries to suggest that even the word ‘*Hayom*’ itself contains an allusion to *Rosh Hashanah* (see for example ‘*Baruch Yomru*’, *Devarim* p. 517; ‘*Mei Marom*’ Vol. 7 Ch. 19). This indicates that there are numerous allusions to *Rosh Hashanah* in our parsha.

Having noted this point I’d like to return to the word ‘Emir’, because in two of the above-mentioned verses we encounter words that sound similar to the word ‘Emir’ – namely: ‘*He’emarta*’ and ‘*He’emir’cha*’.

On their own, these words translate as ‘you have proclaimed’ and ‘He has proclaimed to you’. But as we see from the *Targum Yerushalmi*, these words carry a deeper meaning, with the former being translated as ‘*Amlichtun Aleichon*’ (You will make Me King over you), and the latter being translated as ‘*Amlach Aleichon*’ (I shall be King over you). But why does *Targum Yerushalmi* explain these words this way?

The answer is due to the fact that the word ‘Emir’ refers to monarchs and to the appointing of a king which, as we know, is a major theme in the *Rosh Hashanah*

prayers where we repeatedly speak of God as '*HaMelech*', and where we dedicate a third of the Musaf prayer to explore the theme of '*Malchuyot*'.

Moreover, as Rabbi Baruch Rosenblum points out (see '*Baruch Yomru*', *Devarim* p. 517), knowing the meaning of the word 'Emir' also helps explain a line in the beautiful song that we repeatedly sing on Yom Kippur which proclaims: '*Anu Amecha V'Ata Malkeinu*' – meaning, 'we are Your people, and You are our king', and which is then followed by: '*Anu Ma'amirecha V'Ata Ma'amireinu*' - which we can possibly translate to mean, 'we are your subjects, and You are our monarch'.

Bringing all this together, not only does *Devarim* 26:16-18 beautifully capture the mission of the Jew, but it also alludes to *Rosh Hashanah* when we crown God as king, and when we affirm our commitment to serve God, 'with all our heart and with all our soul'.

Shabbat Shalom!

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