



Youth Project. A proportion of the Yom Kippur appeal will be allocated to this project. Further details will be released shortly.

Whiskiesy/o,Aberloura'Bunadh,Lagavulin16-y/oArdberg Uigeadail and other fine single malts.SpeakerDaniel Greenberg (after Mincha)





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The Chief Rabbi's Rosh Hashanah Message 5779

The Talmud prescribes a blessing to be recited upon seeing royalty: "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has imparted of Your glory to flesh and blood".

The Talmud (Berachot 58a) recounts how the renowned sage, Rav Sheshet, once joined throngs of townsfolk as they lined the streets in anticipation of the momentous arrival of the King. A heretic mocked the Rabbi, who was blind, since he would surely not be able to appreciate such an auspicious event. Yet, when the audible excitement of the crowd increased and the heretic believed that the King's appearance was imminent, Rav Sheshet told him that he was mistaken – the King had not yet arrived. This sequence repeated itself a number of times until, eventually, to the astonishment of all around him, Rav Sheshet announced that the King was about to arrive and, at the precise moment at which he passed, the Rabbi recited the prescribed blessing. The heretic was stunned by what he had witnessed. Rav Sheshet explained, "Earthly royalty is like heavenly royalty. God, who is the King of kings, is not found in the wind, an earthquake or a fire, but 'in a still small voice'" (I Kings 19:12). With this in mind, it was from the hushed silence that Rav Sheshet knew that the king had indeed arrived.

I was reminded of this passage a few months ago, when I was privileged to accompany HRH The Duke of Cambridge on his historic visit to Israel. He arrived at the Kotel on a Thursday morning to the sound of dozens of Barmitzvahs and thousands of vocal worshippers. In preparing Prince William, I had explained that he should expect the entire Kotel plaza to be filled with a loud cacophony of soulful supplication and joyful song. Yet, something quite extraordinary happened. As we reached the Kotel itself, silence fell. Services came to a standstill, as countless people stood in quiet reverence. How would he react to this very special experience? What would he say? The aura of the occasion was palpable – had Rav Sheshet been there, he would have sensed that something special was happening.

The prophet Isaiah (55:6,7) taught, "Seek Hashem while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near". The Talmud tells us that "while He is near" refers to the High Holy Days. For this reason, the central theme of Rosh Hashanah is *'malchut'* – the kingship of Hashem.

Understanding the privilege of being in the presence of 'earthly royalty' can give us an inkling of what it means to be in the presence of 'heavenly royalty'. Over the High Holy Days, our attention should be undivided. How will the King of kings react to what He sees? What will He decree? His presence should be met by no more than the 'still small voice' of introspection and prayer.

Let us utilise this timely opportunity to appreciate Hashem's presence and to be empowered by that awareness to transform our lives for the better.

Valerie and I extend our heartfelt wishes to you all for a happy, peaceful and fulfilling New Year.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis September 2018 • Tishrei 5779

