

One of the more common misconceptions of popular Jewish thought, perhaps especially Modern Orthodox thought, is that mysticism and rationalism are opposed, and that our contemporary empirical tendencies are in direct descent from medieval rationalism. I suggest, by contrast, that mysticism and rationalism have a natural affinity stemming from their anti-materialism in that both assume the importance and reality of metaphysical entities, be they sefirot or concepts. As illustrations of more recent rationalist mysticisms, see various essays by Bertrand Russell, or Mordechai Kaplan's general theology.

The text I'm presenting this week, from R. Yitzchak Arama, illustrates how rationalist theology can lead to conclusions that I think we instinctively react to as pure mysticism, and even to some of the more dangerous aspects of contemporary mysticism. I present it a) for its intrinsic intellectual interest, b) because it is necessary to understand the real grounds for criticizing particular ideas, and c) because it is necessary to acknowledge that troubling ideas often have genuine roots in the masoret.

So to the text itself:

The core argument is that G-d's relationship to His designees differs from that of human authorities to their designees. Human beings delegate authority with the intent of increasing their own; G-d delegates authority in order to elevate those who receive it. This generates the result that G-d's designees are genuinely autonomous, that is to say they act **with** the authority of G-d rather than **under** that authority.

But what is the authority of G-d? It is the ability to manage and manipulate existence so as to create patterns of justice and mercy. Those human beings who act with His authority must have the capacity to perform miracles on their own authority, and it follows that they can make prayers come true; "tzaddik gozeir veHakadosh Barukh Hu mekayyeim". Past examples of such figures are Eliyahu, Mosheh, and Shlomoh, but it is presumed that the Messianic King will outstrip each of these. I trust the contemporary parallel is obvious.

May the study of Hilkheta l'meshicha, even of shitot that I prefer to assign the role of Beit Shammai as against Beit Hillel and regard as "eino Mishnah" for all times, be part of the merit that eventually generates geulah. Shabbat shalom!

### עקידת יצחק שמות שער כז

ובמדרש (שיר פרש' ח):

"מי זה מלך הכבוד?" (תהלים כד) –

למה נקרא שמו של הקב"ה "מלך הכבוד"? שהוא חולק כבוד ליריאו.  
כיצד?

מלך בשר ודם –

אין רוכבין על סוסו;

ואין משתמשין בשרביטו;

ואין יושבין על כסאו;

ואין לובשין עטרה שלו.

אבל הקב"ה –

הרכיב את אליהו על סוסו,

דכתיב "אשר בסופה וסערה דרכו",

ונאמר "ויעל אליהו בסערה השמים";

ומסר שרביטו למשה,

שנאמר "ויקח משה את מטה האל-הים בידו";

והושיב שלמה על כסאו,

שנאמר "וישב שלמה על כסא ה' למלך";

ומלך המשיח עתיד ללבוש עטרה שלו,

שנאמר "תשית לראש עטרת פז",

ונאמר "ראשו כתם פז".

והנה -מפרש ההגדות פירש זה המאמר בענין רוממותו ית', שאינו מתקנא בזולתו, לפי שכל התוארים הללו מהנהגה – הם לו ית' בעצם וראשנה, ולא יאמרו זולתו כי אם בשתוף השם לבד, ומה קנאה יש בהם. והוא דבר הגון בפני עצמו רצוהו חכמינו ז"ל במאמר אחר . . . אמנם אם ירצו בזה כזה המאמר, היה להם לומר "מלך בשר ודם אין רשות להדיוט לרכוב על סוסו", וכן כלם, או "אינו מרכיב וכו'".

אמנם -מה שיראה שכוונהו, הוא הענין הנכבד שעמדנו עליו:

מהיות הנהגת אלו הנמצאות אשר על זה האופן לצורך המונהגים, לא לצורך מציאותו כלל, כמו שאמרנו ראשנה, ושהוא יתעלה נבדל בזה ממלכי האדמה,

כי מלך בשר ודם –

כל הכבוד אשר יעשה לזולתו אינו עושה אלא לצורך עצמו ולהשלים בו חסרונותיו בענייני מלכותו.

כיצד?

הוא צריך לעשות למחמה – יפקיד אחד מעבדיו ויעשהו שר צבא על כל חילו;

צריך לעשות צדקה ומשפט – יושיב אחד מחכמיו על כסא המשפט;

צריך להכות ולרדות המורדים והפושעים – יעמיד שוטר אחד ושבת מושלים בידו;

צריך לצאת מהמלכות – יעמיד סגן ממלא מקומו.

והנה - כאשר יפקיד כל אחד ואחד מאלו איש על מלאכתו הממונה ההוא, ודאי אינו משתמש בגדלות המלך – אדרבה, המלך משתמש בו ועושה בו צרכי עצמו אשר לא יכון הוא ומלכותו זולתו, ואין הממונה ההוא רק כגרזן ביד החוצב, שכאשר לא תכון מלכותו בידו, הנה הוא יסיר את ראשו, והרבה ראיות יש.

אמנם – בתת הא-ל ית' ממשלת ההנהגה לכל אחד מהשלמים על אחד הפנים אשר זכר, אינה לצורך עצמו ומציאותו כלל, כי אם לתועליותם ושלמותם וכבודם.  
ולזה – כשכל אחד מהם משתמש ממנו, הרי הוא משתמש בתכסיסי מלכו' של מעלה, **כאלו היא מלך בפני עצמו, כביכול שותפו של הקב"ה**, שמשמשין בכתרו.

כי אליהו ז"ל –

להיות שלם בעצמו לקנאתו קנאת האמת ועושה מלחמותיה, זכה שהרכיבו הב"ה על סוסו להדמות לעליון אשר בסופה ושערה דרכו, **ולא על העליה בלבד אמרו זה**, כי אם על מה שהיה רודה בנמצאות בעצירת המטר כל השנים ההם, ובפקוד על הארץ כאשר רצה, ובהוריד איש מן השמים, ובהחיות בן הצרפית, ובכל אשר עשה בכח המרכב שהוא אשר הרכיבו בתכסיסי מלכות.  
וכבר הורגל בפי כל החכמים שאח"כ היה במדרגת מלאך ה' הנראה עליהם במראה או בהקיץ כמראה כבוד ה',  
וכבר קראנו אותו בתפלותינו "מהרה יבא אלינו" כענין שאמר הכתוב "יבא אל-הינו ואל יחרש".

גם האיש משה איש האל-הים –

אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים באותות ובמופתים, ובאמת עשאו הא-ל יתברך שוטר לרדות ולהכות לפרעה ונתן שרביט בידו, נתת עליו הוד כבוד מלכות,  
כמו שאמר "ומטה האל-הים בידו",  
ונאמר "ראה נתתיך אל-הם לפרעה ואהרן אחיך יהיה נביאך",  
כמו שכתבנו במקומו.  
ומה נפלא מאד טעם "מה תצעק אלי וגו'" לענין זה,  
כלומר מה לך ולבקש ממני, "אתה הרם את מטך ונטה את ירך" מעצמך "ובקעהו",  
כי הרשות נתונה, כמו שיושלם ביאורו במקומו.

והנה שלמה –

בבחינתו הטובה אשר היטיב לשאול מאת ה' זכה לישיב על כסא המשפט ונתחכם בענין ההוא כחכמת מלאך האלה-ים,  
כמו שנאמר "וכל מלכי הארץ מבקשים את פני שלמה לשמוע את חכמתו אשר נתן אלה-ים בלבו",  
וכבר אמר "כל הדין דין אמת לאמתו נעשה שותף להקב"ה במעשה בראשית" – שותפין ממש, שמשתמש בכתרו,  
כמו שנאמר בביאור "וישיב שלמה על כסא ה' למלך".

אמנם מלך המשיח –

הוא עתיד להיות משנה או סגן למלכו של עולם, להנהיג ההנהגה הזאת שאמרנו בתמידות,  
כמו שנתבאר מהנבואות, ובפרט בסוף נבואות של ישעיהו,  
כי על כן אמרו שילבש עטרה שלו,  
וכמו שאמר (תנחומא פ' תולדות) על הענין הזה עצמו "ונשא וגבה מאד ממלאכי השרת",  
כמו שביארנו שער כ"ח.  
הנה - שכל אלו השלמים והדומים להם, תורה ממשלתם על היותה בידם לצורך עצמם ולכבוד מעלתם, לפי ששלמותם בחותמם זכין להם, שלא כמנהג מלכי בשר ודם . . .

## Akeidat Yitzchak Exodus Chapter 27

From Midrash Shir haShirim 8:

“Who is the king of honor?” –

Why is The Holy Blessed One named “King of Honor”?

Because He distributes honor to those who revere Him.

In what way?

A flesh and blood king –

one does not mount his horse;

one does not use his scepter;

one does not sit on his throne, and

one does not wear his crown,

But The Holy Blessed One –

mounted Eliyahu on His horse,

As Scripture says: “Whose path is amidst storm and whirlwind”,

and it says: “And Eliyahu rose in the whirlwind to the Heavens”;

handed His scepter over to Mosheh,

as Scripture says: “and Mosheh took the staff of the Divine in his hand”;

sat Shlomoh in His seat,

as Scripture says: “and Shlomoh sat on the throne of Hashem as king”;

and the Messianic King will in the future wear His crown,

as Scripture says: “You will place on his head a pure gold crown”,

and it says “His head is a diadem of pure gold”

Now the Interpreter of Haggadot explained this statement as referring to His exaltedness, that He is not jealous of any other, since all those descriptions of management – they are His primarily, and can only be said of anyone else homonymously, so what jealousy of them could He have.

This is a fitting position in its own right that is adopted by our Sages of Blessed Memory in a different statement . . .

However, if they intended something similar by this statement, they should have said:

“A flesh and blood king – a commoner **has no permission** to mount his horse”, and so for all the rest.

Or alternatively,

“He does not mount a commoner on His horse etc.”.

Rather - what they seem to have intended is the weighty matter that we have been addressing, That His management of those existents in this fashion in this manner is for the sake of the managed, not at all for the sake of His existence, as we said previously (= *rishonah* – it is also possible that the word refers to His existence being primary), and that He is distinct in this from all earthly kings.

Because a king of flesh and blood –

All the honor that he does for another, he does only for his own need, and to perfect his lacks with regard to his kingship.

In what way?

If he needs to make war – he will appoint one of his servants and make him officer of all his army;

If he needs to do justice and judgment – he will seat one of his wise men on the throne of judgment;

If he needs to strike and dominate rebels and transgressors – he will raise up an enforcer with the rod of rulers in his hand;

If he needs to leave the kingdom – he will raise up a lieutenant as his substitute.

Now – when any of these oversees his appointed task, certainly he is not making use of the greatness of the king –

on the contrary, the king is using him and doing with him his own needs without which he and his kingdom would not be established, so that this appointee is nothing but an ax in the hand of a chopper, as when his kingdom is not established by the appointee’s hand, the king will remove his head, and there are many proofs of this.

However – when the Divine gives the rule to manage to any of the complete ones in one of the manners mentioned, it is not for His own needs or existence at all, but rather for their ends and perfection and honor. Therefore – when any of them makes use of it, behold he is making use of the accoutrements of the Kingdom Above, **as if he is a king in his own right, as if it were possible the partner of the Holy Blessed One**, for they are making use of his crown.

For Eliyahu of blessed memory –

Since he was complete in himself in that he was zealous for truth and fought her battles, he merited that the Blessed One mounted him on His horse to resemble the Most High Whose path is amid storm and whirlwind, **and this was not said only about his apotheosis**, but rather about his domination of the existents by withholding rain all those years, and overseeing the land [alt. causing it to rain]when he wished, and bringing fire down from the heavens, and reviving the daughter of the woman of Tzarfat, and with everything he did using the power of the Mounter Who mounted him on the accoutrements of the Kingdom.

It is a commonplace among all the Sages that afterward he was on the level of an angel of G-d who appeared to them in visions or waking just as the vision of the Honor of G-d, and we call him in our prayers “may he rapidly come to us” parallel to what Scripture says “let our Divinity come and not be dumb”.

Also the man Mosheh Man of the Divinity –

who brought us up from Egypt with signs and proofs, and in truth the Divine made him enforcer to dominate and strike Par’oh and place the scepter in his hand, placed on him the luster of the honor of the Kingdom,

as Scripture says “and the staff of the Divinity in my hand”,

and it says “See, I have placed you as a divinity for Par’oh, and Aharon your brother will be your prophet”,

as we wrote in those places.

How wonderful is the meaning of “Why cry out to me” in this regard,

meaning “why are you pleading with me, ‘you raise your staff and incline your hand’ on your own ‘and split it’,

because the authority is granted, as I will explain completely in its place.

Now Shlomoh –

In his excellent discernment who did well when asking of Hashem, he merited sitting on the throne of judgment and became wise in that matter to match the wisdom of an angel of the Divinity,

as Scripture says: “and all the kings of the land would seek audience with Shlomoh to hear his wisdom, which Hashem has placed in his heart,

and the Tradition says “Anyone who judges a case in accordance with its essential truth becomes a partner of the Holy Blessed One in the Work of Creation – actual partners, as they make use of His throne,

as Scripture says “and Shlomoh sat on the throne of Hashem as king”.

However, the Messianic king –

He will ultimately be the second-in-command or lieutenant to the King of the World, to manage the previously mentioned management continually,

as is clear from the prophecies, and particularly the end of Yeshayahu’s prophecies, which is why the Tradition [reference unclear] describes him as wearing His crown,

as the Midrash Tanchuma says about this very matter: “and he will be raised up very high, above the ministering angels”.

as we explained in Gate 28.

Now – all these completed people and those similar to them, their rulership shows that it is in their hands for their own purposes and for the honor of their status, because their completeness is acquired to them with their seal [Obscure clause, translation weak], unlike the practice of flesh and blood kings.