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## Rosh HaShanah - Avodah of Ben & Eved

### *Malchiyus - Declaring Hashem's sovereignty*

Hashem says on Rosh HaShanah, "Declare before Me *malchiyus, zichronos, and shofaros*; declare *malchiyus* so that I should rule over you."<sup>[1]</sup>

The truth is that in all of the davening on Rosh HaShanah, the only time we mention "*zichronos*" and "*shofaros*" is in the *tefillah* of *Mussaf*. Throughout all of the *tefillos*, however, we mention *malchiyus*. This shows us that *malchiyus* is the main aspect which we mention on Rosh HaShanah.

"There is no king without a nation."<sup>[2]</sup> In order for Hashem to be King on us, so to speak, we need to declare ourselves as His servants. In other words, the avodah we have on Rosh Hashanah is not just to declare Hashem as our King. It is mainly that we become *His servants*.

Now that we have clarified that the main avodah on Rosh Hashanah is to accept our servitude to Hashem, we must know what it means to be an *eved*, a servant. If we truly know what it means to be an "*eved*", we can understand our mission on this day.

### *"Eved" - Derogatory or Praiseworthy?*

The Gemara<sup>[3]</sup> says that when we do Hashem's will, we are called a *ben* (son) of Hashem, and when we don't do His will, we are called *eved*\servant. It seems from this statement that *eved* is a derogatory title, something we are called when we don't do Hashem's will.

However, we find that Moshe Rabbeinu is given the unique title "*eved*" of Hashem. He is also called "*eved ne'eman*" - "trustworthy servant of Hashem".

This is a paradox. Is *eved* a derogatory title, or is it a praiseworthy title?!

### *Three Levels*

It depends, because there are two implications of the word "*eved*."

1. One person serves his king, not because he loves him, but because he needs the king to fulfill his needs. He's serving the king all for himself. An *eved* like this is the negative implication of *eved*, because all his service to the King is for his own benefit.
2. There is a higher implication of *eved*, and that is when the servant doesn't serve Hashem for his own personal interests, but because he's devoted entirely to the king. This is the deeper

meaning behind why “whatever a servant acquires, his master acquires it” – it is because ideally, a servant has no personal life of his own, and his whole life is devoted to his master. This is the desirable level of *eved* – and one who acts like this fulfills the purpose of Creation. This was the kind of *eved* that Moshe Rabbeinu was. It is the meaning behind the Mishnah in Avos, “Do not be like servants who serve their master in order to receive reward, rather, be like servants who serve their master not to get a reward.”

We see from the above that it’s possible for a person to act selflessly and be considered “*eved*”, and that one doesn’t have to be on the level of “*ben*” in order to reach this. *Ben* is when a person goes even beyond that and serves the king out of his love.

A person needs to have selfless devotion to Hashem, and this is “*eved*.” With this as well, a person needs to have serve Hashem out of a love for Him, and this is called “*ben*.” If so, we have altogether three levels:

1. The lower kind of *eved*, one who serves Hashem only because he needs Him.
2. The higher kind of *eved*, one who serves Hashem because he lives his life for Him.
3. *Ben*, which is when one serves Hashem out of a love for Him.

#### *Practical Guidance for Utilizing Rosh Hashanah*

If we want to prepare ourselves for Rosh Hashanah and declare Him as King over us – and that we become His servants – we must understand that if we feel as if we are forced into serving Him, we are being the first kind of *eved*, and then the whole purpose of Rosh Hashanah will be lost. Our main task on Rosh Hashanah we must do is to be like the second kind of *eved*: that our whole lives should be about one goal alone – serving Hashem. This should be why we live our life, and we shouldn’t have any other personal desires. This is the inner meaning behind all of our avodah on Rosh Hashanah.

It is not enough just to daven slowly and with concentration on Rosh Hashanah. Our main job on this day is to come to a decision that we will change our lives and live only for Hashem – and not for ourselves.

This job obligates us to make a deep internal clarification. We must know exactly what we want to get out of our life, and to examine our deeds to see if they are in line with the goal we are striving for. If one truly decides to live a life of serving Hashem, he has to see if all that he does 24\7 is reflecting this.

#### *How We Can Let Rosh Hashanah Affect Us For The Whole Year*

If a person accepts upon himself to become a true *eved* of Hashem, then Rosh Hashanah must not end for him on the third day of Tishrei; Rosh Hashanah has to carry over into the rest of the year as well, until the next Rosh Hashanah! If a person examines his situation and finds that on Purim and Pesach he doesn’t think about Hashem, it must be that he did not have a good Rosh Hashanah. It shows that he did not accept upon himself on Rosh Hashanah to become an *eved* of Hashem.

May Hashem merit us that we all accept His sovereignty on Rosh Hashanah, and that we should become His true servants – and through this, we can merit to have the light of Rosh Hashanah affect us the whole year round.

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[1] Rosh HaShanah 16b

[2] Kad HaKemach, Rosh HaShanah 70a

[3] Bava Basra 10a

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**Source:** <http://bilvavi.net/english/rosh-hashanah-avodah-ben-eved>