

# **Sparks**

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## **Crowning Our King** *Secrets to a Great New Year*

The Kabbalah says, “There is no king without a nation.” This point requires deep exploration especially on Rosh Hashanna when we acknowledge G-d as our King. It may make sense that, in the human world, a king is dependent on having subjects who acknowledge his sovereignty. The last Emperor of China ceased to be emperor when there were no longer people who bowed when he entered the room. Even after the Communist government had exiled him, as long as people recognized him and acknowledged him as their sovereign, he was, in a very real sense, still a king, albeit without the power to rule. But G-d is reality, so how can G-d be dependent on human acknowledgment?

The world that you and I live in is a product of our perception of reality. The philosopher Immanuel Kant probed this concept. He asked: Do we see reality or do we see our perception of reality? Kant’s answer, of course, is that we do not see reality, but only our perception of reality. In other words, is this world reality? No, this world is your perception of reality. Therefore, the focus and clarity of your consciousness will determine the kind of world you live in.

Imagine three people sitting right next to each other in a doctor’s waiting room. Are they sitting in the same room? Let’s say the first person walked in, and complained, “Oh, how small this room is!” The second person entered, and exclaimed, “Look how bright this room is.” The third person came in, and thought, Ugh, what a messy room. Now, they are sitting inches apart, but they are not in the same room. The first person is sitting in a small room, feeling really cramped. The second person is sitting in a light room, feeling cheerful. The third person is sitting in a messy room, feeling disgusted.

Essentially, what you see is what you get. The world you live in is a product of what you are looking at and are willing to see. This is expressed in the Zohar’s commentary on the story of Jacob as he goes to Egypt to be reunited with his long-lost son, Joseph. Jacob has misgivings about leaving the land of Israel, even to see his beloved son. G-d appears to Jacob and says, “Jacob, don’t worry. Joseph will close your eyes.” The Zohar queries, what does this mean? According to Torah, when a person passes away, someone must close the person’s eyes. The Zohar explains that the colors and textures and shapes of this world exist in your eyes. In order to enter a new world, a higher world, after death, the soul must first leave this world. This world exists in one’s eyes, so the eyes must be closed in order to take leave of this world and see a higher world. G-d is announcing to Jacob that he is going to die in Egypt and that Joseph will be there to close his eyes to this world, so that he will be able to enter, that is, see, the next world.

Is the Zohar saying that this world is an illusion? No. The Zohar is saying that this world is your subjective perception. Your consciousness of reality determines the world you’re in. Your consciousness of G-d determines how much of the light and the truth of G-d will be allowed into your world. To the extent that you acknowledge G-d, G-d will be in your

life. This is a very crucial idea. Although G-d exists and is the King of the world, G-d is not revealed in your perceptual world as such unless you actively acknowledge and invite G-d in. This is our main focus of Rosh Hashanna and spiritual work.

### *Experiencing the Majestic Presence of G-d*

The Talmudic Sages taught: “Everything is in the hands of G-d except awe of G-d.”

The Hebrew word for awe, *yera*, means both “awe” and “will see.” Everything is in the hands of G-d, except for our acknowledging and seeing and being in awe of G-d. If we are in awe we will see G-d. If we are not in awe, if we are not open to seeing G-d, then G-d is not in our world. It’s that simple and that serious.

Some people experience constant Divine presence, which means they see and feel G-d’s care and guidance in their lives. They need \$800 to pay for a car repair, and an unexpected check for \$800 arrives in the mail. They miss a bus, so they get on the next bus, and the person they sit down next to turns out to be a friend from twenty years ago.

Why are such experiences not part of everyone’s daily life? Because, as I said earlier, what you see is what you get.

To the extent that we build our awareness, expand our consciousness, and acknowledge that G-d is our King -- the power directing the show -- we see how G-d runs the show for us. Each one of us has a choice. You can believe that this world is a divine kingdom filled with the presence of G-d, Who cares about it and guides it. Or you can believe that this world is one big accident, a chaotic mess. The choice is yours. But remember: What you believe creates the world you live in.

A friend of mine had an unpleasant experience with the mother of one his students. The student was about to be ordained a rabbi and this greatly upset his mother, who considered organized religion to be backward and fanatical. She was very nasty and cynical about her son’s religious convictions. They were on the way to the ceremony when she turned to my friend and said, “Basically, I don’t believe in God.”

My friend replied, “OK, fine! Don’t believe in God.” He was the first religious person to respond to her that way; others had always tried to convince her of God’s existence. “What?” she exclaimed in surprise.

“You don’t want to believe in God?” he said. “Fine, so live in a godless world.”

That’s essentially the choice we have. If we don’t want to believe in G-d and accept Him as our King, then we will not experience G-d in our world and enjoy His Majestic rule. That doesn’t mean G-d isn’t real and running the universe. G-d is real, but not for those who choose to deny that truth.

In other words, if I’ve never tasted papaya, then there’s no flavor of papaya in my life. Whether it’s real or not for others, it’s not in my life. If I’m blind to the color red, then red will not be one of the colors in my life. If mammals do not see colors, they live in a colorless world. If I’m not willing to see G-d and acknowledge Him as my King, then my world is godless and chaotic.

## ***Building G-d's Kingdom***

How would I act if I really believed that G-d's majestic presence filled my life, my home, my office, my city, my world? How would I speak to my wife and kids? How would I treat the stranger? To the extent that I think, speak, and act in accordance with this heightened awareness, to that extent, G-d can be present in my world. It's not just a matter of believing and saying so. We have to acknowledge G-d's majestic presence in the world constantly, by how we conduct our relationships, how we speak to others, how we eat our lunch, how we do virtually everything. Spirituality without a daily discipline is just a hobby.

It is not only through a collection of very deep ideas that I build consciousness of G-d. I need a daily concrete way to walk the talk. The so-called good deeds and rituals of the Torah's spiritual tradition are designed to be building blocks for nurturing and concretizing consciousness all day long, so that I can turn my world into a Kingdom and channel G-d's majestic presence into my life.

By increasing my consciousness of G-d and acknowledging Him as my King, I thereby allow the light of G-d and all the gifts of spiritual wealth to pour into the world. Few realize the true goodness in deeds and the real richness in rituals. They deeds and rituals are really invitations to G-d. What we are saying in both words and actions is, "G-d, I want to get You into my life!" With abundant prayers and blasts of the shofar we coronate God as our King, turn our world into a divine Kingdom and bring upon us a great new year.

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