

Rosh Hashanah Malchuyot Practicum

October 14, 2015

*Shehu noteh shamayim veyoseid aretz
Umoshav y'karo bashamayim mimaal,
ush-chinat uzo b'govhei m'romim.
Hu Eloheinu; ein od.*

Sovereign Almighty - Monarch of All - the Wellspring of holiness and blessing, who spread out the sky and fashioned the land, who dwells in beauty far beyond sight, whose powerful presence is the loftiest height. You are our God; there is none else. (Mishkan HaNefesh - RH)

Today's portion of our *Rosh Hashanah Kedushat HaYom* functions as a fervent reminder of God's ultimate reign over the world and over humanity. We begin with *Atah V'chartanu*, our reminder to God that we have been chosen as Jews to serve a holy purpose on this earth and we conclude with *Areshet S'fateinu* - a plea to accept our prayers and recognize our sounding of the shofar. We are human, we are fallible and we are blasting this awareness into the universe.

I struggle with liturgy that circles around themes of chosenness, sacrifice, exile and (literally) bowing down to a God that is King. As Reform Jews living in the 21st century, how do we rationalize this? As a Jewish woman, do I open up my lips to pray to a God who anthropomorphically hails over us in his throne up in the heavens? Every time we pray, it is to *melech haolam*, our King of the world, and on this particular day, we exalt God's name to such a height that we devote an entire section of our liturgy to God's sovereignty.

For insight, I turn to a prayer that we recite every day - the *Aleinu*. In this prayer, which we uplift and herald as the pinnacle moment of our humility during the *Malchuyot* service, I find my majestic God. God is our creator, and God is the very essence that serves as a connecting thread to everything tangible and intangible on this earth. God who spread out the heavens and the land, exists in nature, and "dwells in beauty far beyond sight." Though the notion of "king" is

hard to grapple with, the concept that God is more powerful than anything I can comprehend resonates.

We invoke the metaphor of royalty to put something so incomprehensible into a language that we understand. To me, God is the ultimate "everything," and *ein od* - there is nothing else. For this, I accept my place as a humble servant and make way for this all-powerful entity. In today's practicum you will hear our ancient text fused with classical and contemporary melodies alike. Through these musical interpretations of liturgy, I hear how God is greater than humanity. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable to you God, and may this music shine light on Your eminence.