

Shemini 5776

BS"D Parashat Shemini 5776

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On the Roof of the Beit HaMikdash

Chazal chose the Book of Shmuel II, chapters 6-7, as the haftara for parashat Shemini. The reason for chapter 6 is readily understood because of its similarity to our parasha. Both deal with righteous men, Nadav and Avihu sons of Aharon and Uza ben Avinadav who acted on their own when dealing with the mishkan and holy ark; however, chapter 7 is seemingly out of place.

Chapter 7 relates how King David wished to build the Bet HaMikdash, but was denied that privilege when the prophet Natan delivered to David HaShem's message saying that the Bet Hamikdash will be built by David's son, King Shlomo.

That is, except for one ostensibly minor verse in chapter 7, in the prophet Natan's message to King David:

וְעַתָּה אֶמְצֵא אֶת־דָּוִד עֹשֶׂה אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתָי וְעַתָּה אֶמְצֵא אֶת־דָּוִד עֹשֶׂה אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתָי
וְעַתָּה אֶמְצֵא אֶת־דָּוִד עֹשֶׂה אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתָי וְעַתָּה אֶמְצֵא אֶת־דָּוִד עֹשֶׂה אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתָי

And now tell my servant David: Thus did the Lord of Hosts say, "I have taken you from after the oasis from tending the sheep to be the leader of my nation of Israel."

What is the connection?

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 52:a) relates that it was common knowledge that Nadav and Avihu were the heirs to the

leadership posts of Moshe and Aharon. To such an extent that the two sons waited impatiently for the demise of the two elders so that they could assume the reins of leadership.

However, everyone who thought that they would unquestionably be the next leaders were proven wrong when Nadav and Avihu died at the height of their spiritual experience. At the consecration ceremony of the Mishkan they offered Ketoret sacrifices without being commanded to do so.

At the other extreme, the chances that David, son of Yishai, the shepherd boy from Beit Lechem, would be king of Israel were never even entertained in the caucus rooms of the nation's movers and shakers.

Nadav and Avihu, the irrefutable future leaders of Israel, were never granted the opportunity to assume power; whereas the shepherd David began the eternal lineage of the Davidic kings up to the future appearance of the Mashiach. David was plucked out by HaShem, from behind the water holes where his sheep would drink, to become the greatest king the nation has ever had.

A very clear message rings out from this haftara, that even the most obvious of future events are liable to change according to the unknown, to us, wishes of HaShem.

The Legitimacy of King David

Notwithstanding David's selection by HaShem Himself, his great Torah erudition and the fact that he was the first monarch to bring the entire Land of Israel according to the Torah boundaries under Jewish sovereignty, things did not progress smoothly for David and his monarchy. Many of his generation rejected his right to rule because of his converted Moabite great-grandmother Ruth.

אם אדם אומר לך שיש חכמה בקרב האומות, ...אם אדם אומר לך שיש תורה (קדושה

If one tells you that there is wisdom among the nations, believe it; but if he tells you that there is Torah (kedusha – sanctity) among the nations, do not believe it.

The great heartache of our times is that millions of Gentiles are aware of what HaShem's own chosen people are blind to. Thousands of Gentiles pass by the square in front of my home in the Old City in awe of their merit to be in the Holy Land, while the majority of Jews in the USA have never stepped foot on the holy soil.

The State of Israel is the first sign of the redemption of our people. Only a fool can imagine that HaShem will send the Mashiach to a desert land empty of Jews. The Medina is performing what it was destined to do – to bring willing sons and daughters back to Eretz Yisrael.

While we build the "roof of the Beit Hamikdash" for the Mashiach to appear on, many leaders of galut Jewry convince unfortunate, well-meaning Jewish souls not to come home.

Had the rabbis ordered our people to return in the wake of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which declared Eretz Yisrael on both sides of the Jordan River as the "national home" of the Jewish people, Churchill would not have written in his memoirs in the 1920's: "On the porch of the King David Hotel, with my pencil, I established the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan."

Had the Jews of Europe come back, they would not have gone to heaven through the chimneys of Hitler's extermination camps. Had the Jews returned en masse after the Six Day War in 1967, today there would be no Palestine Authority in Shomron and Yehuda, and no Hamas in Gaza.

In any event, the Mashiach will come, and he will ask every Jew one simple question: "Where were you when I came?"

My family, friends and neighbors will all answer: "We were in Eretz Yisrael". But there will be many other answers such as: "Teaneck," or "Williamsburg," or "Crown Heights" and "Square Town," and the long list of recommended places that I saw on the OU website for young Jewish couples to live.

I am quite certain that the Mashiach is an understanding person. He will appreciate the stressful situation our people are going through in the galut, and the difficulties they encounter in having to uproot themselves from their familiar surroundings to come to a country on the edge of the desert surrounded by fierce enemies.

But at the same time, the Mashiach will also be a very practical leader; and in his capacity of bringing Torah to the entire world, I would not be surprised if he would institute a very practical solution for his problem: that all the Jews who will be in the galut upon his arrival will have to remain in the galut, where they will be the Mashiach's emissaries to teach the non-Jews their seven Noachide laws. And while they will be busy in Africa and in the jungles of South America and in the city jungles of New York and Chicago, we in Eretz Yisrael will be putting the final touches on the roof of the Beit HaMikdash.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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