

Shemini 5780

BS"D Parashat Shemini 5780

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Leaders of Israel

Haftarot are mostly one chapter of TaNaCh and rarely include a few additional verses from another chapter; however, our parasha has been matched by chazal with two full chapters 6-7 from the Book of Shmuel II.

The reason for chapter 6 is readily understood because of its similarity to the events in the parasha; both deal with tragic events at the least auspicious time. In parashat Shemini at the most spiritual and emotionally charged moment of the Mishkan's consecration ceremony, the two elder sons of Aharon – Nadav and Avihu bring a ketoret offering and suddenly die. And in the book of Shmuel chapter 6 at the emotionally charged pilgrimage to bring the Holy Ark by members of the tribe of Yehuda to Yerushalayim, Uza son of Avinadav seized the ark when he thought it was about to fall, and he too suddenly died. However, chapter 7 which deals with HaShem informing King David through the prophet Natan that he will not build the Bet Hamikdash has no seeming relevance with parashat Shemini. That is, except for one apparently minor phrase (7:8) said by the prophet:

וְעַתָּה אֵלֶּכְךָ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל אֲדֹנָיִךְ דָּוִד
כֹּכָה עָשָׂה לִּי ה' כִּי אֶבְרָכָה אֶת הָעָם

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."

I suggest:

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 52:a) relates that it was common knowledge that Nadav and Avihu were the heirs apparent to the leadership posts of Moshe and Aharon. However, common knowledge was proven wrong when Nadav and Avihu died while bringing fire to the altar.

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. Even when Shmuel was sent to anoint one of Yishai's sons to replace King Shaul Yishai brought to the meeting his eldest 7 sons while David was left tending the sheep. And yet, 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.

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 kings up to the future appearance of the Mashiach.

Building the Roof of the Beit HaMikdash

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.

It was only after David's death, during the consecration ceremony of the Beit Hamikdash built by King Shlomo, that the nation accepted the legitimacy of the Davidic lineage, when the self-locking doors of the Ulam opened up only at the mention of David's name (Shabbat 30:a).

The refusal to recognize the anointed one of HaShem is not an isolated incident in our history, for it will occur again at the time of David's descendant – the Mashiah.

The following is brought as several Midrashim:

[illegible]

Our rabbis have taught that when the Mashiach will appear, he will stand on the roof of the Beit Hamikdash and announce to the nation, "Humble ones! The time for your salvation has arrived. And if you do not believe, look at the light which has shined upon you... upon you alone, and not upon the other nations of the world."

The same skepticism and refusal to believe that HaShem really loves His nation Israel and redemption has begun, as the Midrash describes, is not clouded in some unforeseen future date – it is now very much upon us.

The Midrash says (Eicha Chap. 2)

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 many observant of HaShem's own chosen people are not. Thousands of gentiles pass by the square in front of my home in the Old City every day in awe of their merit to be in the Holy Land, while the majority of observant Jews including rabbis and yeshiva students 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, with all its seeming faults, is performing what it was set about 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 poor, 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, 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 and friends 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 in the States 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

Be careful – be healthy – be here

Nachman Kahana