

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

PARSHAT SHELACH

Haftora: The Ideal Jewish King

The Haftora for Parshas Korach is from the book of Shmuel Alef (Samuel I). It tells of how Shmuel established King Shaul as the sovereign over the Jewish people. This was the second time Shmuel did this. The first time was a small event in Mitzpa, as Shaul's sovereignty wasn't widely accepted. But now, after proving himself by winning a battle against the Amorites, the whole nation rallied around him. The second event, establishing Shaul as King in Gilgal, was celebrated with great festivity and joy.

With the nation gathered in Gilgal, Shmuel talked to the Jewish people. First, he established his innocence as a leader who never took anything from the people. He said, "Whose ox have I taken? And whose donkey have I taken? Have I robbed anyone? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I taken payment that caused me to hide my eyes (from his wrongdoing)?" The

people answered that he hadn't done any of those things. Then he reminded them of how much Hashem did for them and reprimanded them for asking for a king when Hashem is their King. He continued to say that as long as they stay true to Hashem, they will live happily with their king. He then warned them not to turn away from Hashem and what will happen if

they do. He then demonstrated that point by asking Hashem to make it rain. Being the time of harvest, it would damage all of the crops. It began to pour, and they asked Shmuel to pray for the rain to stop. He told them not to fear, just remember not to turn away from Hashem. The point was made - that their lives are in Hashem's hands, and they realized that asking for a king was the wrong thing to do. He then concluded by reminding them not to turn away from Hashem and that no matter what, Hashem will not abandon them.

How does this connect to our Parsha? The simple answer is that in the Parsha, Moshe said a statement

of innocence, "not a donkey have I taken from a single one of them, and I haven't harmed a single one of them." Similar to what Shmuel said in the Haftora, "Whose ox have I taken? And whose donkey have I taken?..." The problem with this explanation is that it's only a detail. How do the themes of the Haftora and the Parsha sync?

Perhaps we could say that when the Jewish people asked Shmuel for a king over them, rather than having him continue as their leader, it was a form of rebellion akin to the rebellion of Korach in our Parsha. The problem with this explanation is that it is really not the same because appointing a king over the Jewish people is a mitzvah, as it says, "You shall appoint over yourself a king." What, then, is the theme of the Parsha that the Haftora highlights?

There is a famous question asked about this. When the Jewish people asked for a king, Shmuel was unhappy. Hashem was unhappy as well. He said to Shmuel, "For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from reigning over them." Yet He commanded Shmuel to go ahead with it. Now, if it's a mitzvah to appoint a king, why are they upset? And if they are upset, why did Hashem tell Shmuel to appoint a king?

There are two possible reasons for appointing a king. The first is for basic law and order, like any nation that has a king or other governing body. As it says in Pirkei Avos, "If not for the fear (of the king), one man would swallow the other alive." Even though people should know better, their nature is to want things, which causes them to go against what is right. Having a king and a government is a deterrent for such behavior.

However, in an ideal Jewish community, the people are G-d fearing, and that is their deterrent. Hashem is their King. In that case, appointing a king is for a different reason. It is because of the greatness of the king, that he is head and shoulders above the nation spiritually, and he can help us reach higher levels of closeness to Hashem than we could attain on our own. The ideal Jewish king is not the great warrior or someone who could wield his power over the people; rather he is a giant of spiritual holiness. Why is he so

THE IDEAL JEWISH LEADER IS A GIANT OF SPIRITUAL HOLINESS, HUMILITY, AND TORAH SCHOLARSHIP.



great? Because, not only is he a spiritual giant and a Torah scholar of the highest caliber, he is so humble and feels so nullified before Hashem that Hashem clearly comes through and expresses Himself through him. He is at such a high level, beyond anything even learned and G-d-fearing Jews could reach on their own. In the Torah, the king is often called the Nassi, which, like the word nasso, means to raise. Because the job of the king is to raise the people higher. One such person was Moshe, and another will be Moshiach. A person who is at this level has no interest in power or being the king, his greatness is a natural part of him and he has no need to control people. It is us, who recognize that he is beyond anything we could attain, and we request of him to be our king.

When they asked Shmuel for a king, they didn't ask for the kind of king that will bring them closer to Hashem. They asked for a king "like all the nations," a law and order king, and this was upsetting because it meant that they didn't feel that Hashem was their King, there was a lack of fear of Hashem. It was a rejection of Hashem. This is what Shmuel meant when he said, "And you said to me, 'no, rather a king should rule over us,' but Hashem your G-d is your King."

If Hashem was unhappy with the request, why did He give them the king they were asking for?

Now that the Jewish people asked for a king "like all the nations," it was a clear demonstration of how low they had fallen. There was no time to waste; they really needed a king to guide them, to show them the right way to live. Once they have accepted upon themselves a leader to show them the right way, with time, they will become G-d fearing, and then they will be able to have the higher level of king, who will bring them to new heights and to a deeper connection with Hashem.

Now that we don't have a king, who fills that much-needed position? Our sages tell us, "Who is the king? The rabbis." They serve as our guides. In Pirkei Avos, it says, "Make for yourself a rabbi," These are the words of Rabbi Yehoshua, the son of Prachya, who was the Nassi in his time. He was of the opinion that every Jewish person, even the most knowledgeable, like himself, should have a rabbi to guide him.

This is a call to every Jewish person to find for themselves a rabbi. For some, it means a guide in everyday matters, for others, it means a guide to higher spiritual growth. If one says, "I will be my own rabbi; I don't need a rabbi for guidance," that is a lack of fear of Hashem. No matter how learned you are, you should have a rabbi.

It doesn't mean a rabbi in the rabbinical sense, but rather someone who you respect and you feel that he can guide you in the ways of Torah and spirituality.

Perhaps this is how the Haftora brings out the theme of

the Parsha. Korach and his cohorts came before Moshe and Aaron with a complaint, "The entire congregation is all holy, and Hashem is in their midst, so why do you raise yourselves above Hashem's community." In other words, do we need you two (or anyone else) to guide us? We are G-d-fearing; isn't that enough? But in truth, that is when Jewish people need a guide - to take them to heights they could not reach on their own. That is a form of rejection of Hashem, because, why wouldn't you want a king, a Moshe that will bring you ever closer to Hashem? The Haftora stresses the point that we should not reject Hashem, and Korach and his cohorts rejected Hashem on a deeper level because, being that they were at a higher level, they should have known better.

May we merit to see Moshiach become our king, the one who will take us to the greatest heights and the deepest levels of closeness to Hashem. May it happen soon.

Dedicated to the Rebbe, whose yahrzeit is this week. He was the leader who saw the potential in every person and raised us to a higher level.

"Dear Rabbi Yitzi,

I recently started following you on Instagram, and what drew me was that it's very well put together and thoughtful excerpts, and you and your wife make a wonderful team, it's really sweet and inspiring to see.

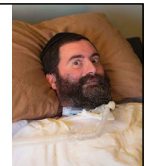
My husband's late grandmother also had ALS and it continues to be very hard on him. But despite this, you and your wife are so strong and have an amazing message to the world, your hard work and love shows.

I will also keep you both in my prayers and thoughts. Hashem works in so many great ways"

- Melanie J, Northern California

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
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Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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