



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA
SHMIDMAN

DIRECTOR,
OU WOMEN'S INITIATIVE



A Lesson in Jewish History

PARSHAT KORACH - SHMUEL 11

The haftorah of Parshat Korach opens at a moment of profound transition. The Jewish people have asked for a king, and Shmuel responds with sharp rebuke and deep disappointment. Yet before addressing the request itself, Shmuel does something unexpected: he recounts Jewish history. He reviews the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, the period of the Shoftim and the repeated cycles of failure, tefillah and salvation that shaped the nation. Why does Shmuel begin here?

The Malbim explains that Shmuel is reminding the people of a fundamental truth: the survival of Klal Yisrael never depended on political systems or military power. Again and again, Hashem saved the

nation without a king. When the people cried out to Hashem, He sent leaders to deliver them. וַיִּשְׁלַח ה' אֶת יְרֻבְעֵל וְאֶת בְּדַן וְאֶת יִפְתָּח וְאֶת שְׂמוּאֵל, *Hashem sent Yerubaal, Bedan, Yiftach and Shmuel* (Shmuel I 12:11). The emphasis is striking. The Shoftim themselves were not the source of the nation's salvation, but messengers through whom Hashem guided and protected His people. At this pivotal moment, Shmuel fears that the people are beginning to confuse the messenger with the true Source of their security. The request for a king was not inherently wrong. The Torah itself speaks of monarchy. But the people begin to believe that security will come through political structure and human strength rather than through their relationship with Hashem. Shmuel therefore retells Jewish history to remind them that the foundation of Jewish survival has always been something deeper.

In many ways, Shmuel is following a familiar Tanach pattern. Before moments of transition or covenantal renewal, Jewish leaders often recount history. Moshe repeatedly retells the national story in Sefer Devarim before the people enter Eretz Yisrael. Yehoshua gathers the nation in Shechem and reviews Jewish history before renewing the covenant. And now Shmuel does the same as the nation enters the era of monarchy. Because before a nation can move forward, it must remember who it is. Jewish history is not presented in Tanach as nostalgia or background information. It is orientation. It reminds the people where their strength truly comes from and what ultimately sustains them.

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That is why the storm at the end of the haftarah is so significant. Thunder and rain descend during the dry harvest season, disrupting the natural order itself. Even as the nation moves toward kingship and political organization, Shmuel reminds them that nature, history and national destiny remain in Hashem's hands. Perhaps that is the enduring message of the haftarah. At moments of uncertainty, we naturally search for systems, structures and leaders that promise stability. Yet Shmuel reminds the people that no political framework alone can guarantee the future of Klal Yisrael. Before building the future, the nation must remember the story that carried it here all along. ■

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