

HAFTORAH INSIGHTS
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Long Live the King

MELACHIM 1:1-31

Many of us have been singing "David Melech Yisrael, chai, chai v'kayam" since we were children. We learned the tune, perhaps even the hand motions, long before we thought about the words. David, King of Israel, lives and endures. What do we mean when we sing them?

The familiar words appear in the Gemara, but their message echoes in the closing words of this week's haftorah. Batsheva bows before David HaMelech and says: יְחִי אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד לְעֹלָם, "May my lord King David live forever" (Melachim I 1:31).

Her words are striking in their context. David is elderly and frail. Adoniyahu has moved to claim the throne, and Batsheva has approached David to remind him of his promise that Shlomo will succeed him. David assures her that he will fulfill his oath that very day. It is then that she wishes him everlasting life.

On its simplest level, this is a blessing offered to a king. Yet its placement invites a deeper reading. Batsheva speaks of David living forever at the very moment he takes responsibility for what will continue after him. By securing Shlomo's succession, David ensures that his kingship will extend beyond his own lifetime.

Centuries later, the Gemara uses a related declaration in a seemingly unexpected setting. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi instructs Rabbi Chiya to go to Ein Tav, sanctify the new month, and send back a sign: "David Melech Yisrael chai v'kayam" (Rosh Hashanah 25a). Why should a message about the moon invoke David HaMelech?

Rashi explains that David's kingship is compared to the moon. The Rama develops this connection when explaining our recitation of these words at Kiddush Levanah: David's kingdom will one day be renewed as the moon is renewed (Orach Chaim 426:2).

The moon teaches us to look beyond what is visible at a particular moment. Its light diminishes until it disappears from view, yet we await its return. So, too, our declaration about David expresses faith in the enduring promise of his kingship, even through generations when its fulfillment remains hidden.

In the haftorah, Batsheva's words accompany the securing of the next generation. In the Gemara, David's name accompanies the announcement of renewal. And when we sing those familiar words today, we affirm our faith that the promise of Malchus Beis David continues, and we await its fulfillment through Mashiach.

The song we learned as children carries a hope our people have held for generations. Each time we sing it, let us give that hope a voice. ■