

PROBING THE PROPHETS

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Two Accounts That Equal One

We need not wonder why Chazal selected the first perek of M'lachim A as a fitting choice for the haftarah of Chaye Sarah, for it echoes the events we find in the parasha. The Torah reading recounts the final years of Avraham Avinu's life, during which he lays the foundations for his son's future and, ultimately, for the future of the nation yet to emerge. Similarly, our haftarah tells of David HaMelech's final days and his preparations for the future reign of his son and, ultimately, for the dynasty of his nation. Indeed, just as the parasha details Avraham's preparations to hand over the reins of leadership to his son, Yitrzchak, the haftarah echoes the same, including David Hamelech's efforts to ensure that the leadership of his reign be handed to his son, Shlomo. It is no 'coincidence' that our text opens the haftarah with the phrase: "**V'Hamelech David zaken, ba bayamim**" reiterating precisely what the parasha states: "**V'Avraham zaken, ba bayamim".**

And yet, despite the many similarities between these two accounts, I am particularly troubled by the striking differences of the portrayal of David's final days in Sefer M'lachim with the description found in Divrei HaYamim A [perek 29].

Our haftarah portrays David as an aging, weakened monarch, confined to his palace, increasingly sensitive to the cold and, consequently, seemingly oblivious to the events unfolding around him. On the other hand, the final days of David described in the last chapter of Divrei HaYamim, presents the King as a vibrant, animated leader! The text relates how David gathered the nation's leaders to proclaim that Shlomo, his son, would succeed him upon the throne, to detail what valuables he had already gathered for the soon-to-be construction of the Bet HaMikdash and to bless and thank Hashem – included in the prayer "**ויברך דויד**" that we recite every morning.

How can we understand these two contradictory accounts of David 's final days? Not only do the descriptions of David's physical state contradict with each other, but the timetable of the events clash with each other as well! The story that opens in the haftarah is completed only after the haftarah concludes. There, we learn that David, having heard of the attempted



coup by his son, Adoniya, commands the Navi, the Kohen Gadol and the General to lead Shlomo down to the Gichon river and have him anointed as King. And, throughout the enthronement of the new king and its accompanying celebration.... David HaMelech remains in his palace, too weak to attend this historic event.

And now, consider this: the self-same episode we read in our haftarah is depicted quite differently in Divrei HaYamim. There, we do not find any mention of the weakening of David, nor any reference to Adoniah's attempt to usurp David's throne or the report of Bat Sheva and Natan regarding the coup! Additionally, the text places David HaMelech in the center of Shlomo's coronation and its festivity, something that the haftarah clearly denies!!??

Over the years, I struggled to understand these inconsistencies and, only recently, did I find a possible key to resolve this conundrum...I hope.

David's detailed instructions regarding the construction of the Bet HaMikdash and his promise of have Shlomo as his successor, were given first to Shlomo and, later, to the nation's leaders. This took place before the waning strength of the King began. He had the strength to bless the entire congregation as well but, soon after that, could do little more. The text adds three crucial words in the verse that follows David's 'bracha' to the nation... **ממחרת היום ההוא – "on the morrow of that very day"** - which was when all of Israel offered sacrifices to Hashem and wildly celebrated the coronation of Shlomo. But there is no mention of David on that day.

We might very well understand "**the morrow**´ as referring to more than the very next day. Perhaps, David was weak but *not yet* incapable of blessing the people. Perhaps.

When we understand that this later text authored by Anshei Knesset HaG'dolah was written some 500 years after these events, an era of Israel's return from exile, and a time that Chazal hoped to rebuild the Bet HaMikdash AND to return the Davidic dynasty to leadership...well, we understand why they chose to include the positive accomplishments of David to the newly returned.

No, there is no "fake news" in Tanach [ch'v] but this was a desire to impact a struggling generation with the hope of building a new nation, blessed by HKBH!! ■

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