

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

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פְּרָשַׁת שְׁמִינֵי תִשְׁבִּי"ו

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וְדָד מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל עֹז לִפְנֵי ה' וְדָד חָגַר אֶפֶוד בְּד. (שמואל ב' ו' יד)

David danced with all his strength before Hashem and David was girdled with a linen tunic.

Our *Haftarah* presents one of the most dramatic narratives in all תנ"ך and fortunately, Rav Meir Simcha has left us two penetrating pieces on it. Before reviewing them, it is worthwhile to set its historical context by citing the Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash editors' compelling synopsis of it: "...our *Haftarah* tells us how (King) David and the people brought the *Aron* to Yerushalayim, after twenty years during which it had no permanent home... David prepared a tent for it in Yerushalayim, and, with honor and celebration, escorted it there. There is another parallel to (our) Parsha (in that) the tragedy of death dampened the joy. The *Aron* was being transferred on a wagon, in contradiction to the Torah's prescribed procedure that it be borne on the shoulders of the Leviim. As the procession traveled toward Yerushalayim, the *Aron's* weight shifted, and it appeared to be in danger of falling-but the *Aron* cannot fall, because in the phrase of חז"ל, 'the *Aron* carries its bearers.' Uzzah, a son of Avinadav (whose home it was being kept until then), rushed to support the *Aron*, and he died on the spot. Like the sudden deaths of Nadav and Avihu, Uzzah's punishment was a sanctification of the Name because it demonstrated the awesomeness of the *Aron's* holiness. Fearing that the *Aron* presented a danger to its environs or that he was not worthy of being its host, David stopped the procession and had the *Aron* placed with a Levi named Obed-edomi. Far from being a danger however, the *Aron* proved to be a blessing to its new host, so David had it brought to Yerushalayim with pomp and celebration, with sanctity and devotion. No one celebrated more than the king himself, dancing with abandon in a public display of boundless joy that the *Aron* was coming 'home'. But Queen Michal was not pleased. To her it was unseemly for the king to engage in such 'undignified' behavior as to dance in front of the 'common' women of Israel, and she chastised him for it. Sharply, he replied that it was a privilege rather than a disgrace to show one's support for the *Aron*. For demeaning David's joyous behavior, Michal did not live to raise her child; she died in childbirth."

Rav Meir Simcha's focus is on the word עֹז. Clearly, the straightforward translation is as noted: He *danced with all his strength and* abandon in a public display of boundless joy *before Hashem*. He reminds us that עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן, *Tehillim*, ה' עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן /*Hashem will give עֹז to His nation*, Mechilta tells us that אֵין עֹז אֶלָּא תּוֹרָה i.e., David was never without the Torah by his side, as commanded of a Jewish king: ...וְכָתַב לוֹ אֶת מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת... (the king) *shall write for himself two copies of this Torah... It shall be with him and he shall read from it all the days of his life...* Also, in ברכות ו. R Avin bar R' Adda tells us: "From where is it derived that HKBH wears *tefillin*? It says in ח' ישיעיהו סב' ח' *נִשְׁבַּע ה' בְּיָמֵינוּ, יִשְׁעִיהוּ סַב' ח' וּבְזְרוּעַ עֹזוֹ /Hashem has sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength-עֹזוֹ* refers to Hashem's *tefillin*." So that עֹז is also *tefillin*. עֹז וְדָד מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל עֹז can thus be understood as David was dancing with all those items that are referred to as עֹזוֹ-his personal Sefer Torah and his *tefillin*. Rav Meir Simcha adds that his wearing *tefillin* should have been an important clue to Michal of

her husband's true mindset, as Rav Meir Simcha shows us that in ברכות ל: "R' Yirmiyah was sitting before R' Ze'ira and saw that R' Yirmiyah was excessively joyful. He said to him: 'It is written in כג משלי יד' כג *In all sorrow there is profit* i.e., sorrow is appropriate, not excessive joy? R' Yirmiyah said to him: 'It is permissible for me because I have on *tefillin*.'" And as Rashi adds, "...*tefillin* are testimony that one is under His Creator's rulership and in His service." Michal not only mistook her husband's actions as unbecoming but also ignored the *tefillin* he was wearing which was proof that he always maintained his elevated level of שְׂמִימִים!

The story continues: Once the *Aron* was successfully transferred to *Yerushalayim*, King David yearns to build an appropriate home for it. Hashem tells His prophet Nathan to tell David that commendable as this is, it would be his son and not he, who would build the *Bayis*. Hashem assured him though that his royal line would endure forever. Rav Meir Simcha's second piece is on the last pasuk of the *Haftarah*, *וְכָל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְכָל הַחֲזִיוֹן הַזֶּה בֵּן דָּבָר נֶתֶן אֶל דָּוִד*, *In accordance with all these words and this entire vision, so Nathan spoke to David*, which he feels is superfluous i.e., do we really have to be told that Nathan told David everything-would we have thought otherwise? And why in such a wordy way? He answers as follows: Part of Nathan's prophecy was also אָדָם אֶתְּנֶה לְאָבִי אֶתְּנֶה לִּי לְבֵן אֲשֶׁר בְּהַעֲוֹתוֹ וְהִכַּחֲתִיו בְּשֵׁבֶט אַנְשִׁים וּבְנִגְעֵי בְּנֵי אָדָם (Hashem said concerning David's offspring that) *I will be a Father to him and he shall be a son to Me; therefore, when he sins, I shall chastise him with the rod of men and with afflictions of human beings*. Rav Meir Simcha feels that the redundancy of this pasuk is intimating that this Father-son relationship also applied to David himself, i.e., in his lifetime, Hashem will castigate him for any wrongdoings just as a loving Father would. And Rav Meir Simcha finds evidence for this in יומא בב: where R' Huna discusses David's "failings". One was the incident in which he had Uriah killed. The other was the way he conducted a census of the Jewish people, which led to many deaths in a plague. The Gemara asks about the Batsheva debacle and he answers that ultimately, in that case, David was indeed given a fourfold punishment for taking her-the first child born to her and David died; Tamar, his daughter, was violated by his son Amnon who was also killed; and his son Avshalom rebelled against him and was ultimately killed. The Gemara continues to tell us that "David was also punished personally for he was stricken with leprosy for six months after that incident, the *Sanhedrin* withdrew from him in protest over his behavior, and the *Shechina* also left him." So that אָדָם אֶתְּנֶה לְאָבִי אֶתְּנֶה לִּי לְבֵן אֲשֶׁר בְּהַעֲוֹתוֹ, וְהִכַּחֲתִיו בְּשֵׁבֶט אַנְשִׁים וּבְנִגְעֵי בְּנֵי אָדָם in fact also applied to David. Where does Rav Meir Simcha see this? The wordiness of *וְכָל הַחֲזִיוֹן הַזֶּה* pointed him to this i.e., Nathan is hinting to him that "what I was told by Hashem is not limited to the future but this close relationship will also apply to you!" He acknowledges this unusual interpretation by concluding it with *בֵּן נִרְאָה בְּיָאוֹר הַלְשׁוֹן הַזֶּה, אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִמְצָא בְּתַנְיָא דְּדוּגְמָתוֹ*.

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ר' ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור ע"ה
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