

HAFTORAH COMMENTARY PARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

M'lochim I:1

This week's haftorah teaches us an important lesson about Divine providence. Dovid Hamelech suddenly aged and withdrew from the affairs of his kingdom. This development created a significant void in the parliament and opened the door to minority groups and conspiracy. Adoniyahu, a son of the king seized the opportunity and began grooming himself for the throne. This was in direct opposition to the king's wishes who publicly declared his son Shlomo as his successor. Dovid's choice was rooted in a prophecy received years earlier that he would be granted a son named Shlomo who would be his successor. In fact, Dovid secured this issue from the outset and promised Shlomo's mother, BasSheva, that her son would be the next king. Now, in Dovid's aged state this matter took a mean turn and Adoniyahu secretly and rapidly developed a strong following. The king's closest advisors discovered this plot and corroborated with Shlomo's mother to appeal to the king. After hearing the severity of the situation the king responded and ordered the immediate coronation of Shlomo. Adoniyahu's attempt gave rise to an unprecedented experience and Shlomo succeeded his father during Dovid Hamelech's own lifetime.

These drastic measures reveal serious concern over Shlomo's actual reign. The Sages reflect upon this situation and raise a perplexing question. Further in this chapter Scriptures tell us that Dovid Hamelech's order to anoint Shlomo met great trepidation. B'nayahu, the presiding member of Sanhedrin responded and said, "Let it be Hashem's will that the mission is successful." (M'lochim 1:36) The Sages question the need for a blessing at this point. It suggests that B'nayahu was uncertain of the mission's worthiness in Hashem's eyes. They question, "Didn't Hashem promise Dovid from the outset that Shlomo would be the next king?" Now that this prophecy was in the midst of fulfillment what could possibly affect it? They answer that although Hashem's original promise was but moments away from fulfillment many impediments would present themselves prior to its actual realization. (Breishis Rabba 76:2)

These words teach us an important lesson about Divine providence. Although Shlomo's reign was pre-ordained and promised to Dovid Hamelech these did not guarantee its reality. The sages explain that prophetic statements of this nature are subject to change. They are given in accordance to the individual's worthiness and depend upon his maintaining standards of piety and perfection. They draw proof to this from our Patriarch Yaakov who was severely frightened by his wicked brother Eisav's pending encounter with him. They explain that although Hashem promised earlier to protect

Yaakov he did not feel secure. He was concerned that he may have unintentionally committed some fault and forfeited His protection. Apparently, Dovid Hamelech shared a similar concern that he may have forfeited some of his merits and no longer deserve that Shlomo be his successor. (see Maharzu's comment ad loc)

Ramchal however deduces a second dimension from this Midrash. He sternly warns us against delaying to perform a mitzva and states, "When a mitzva opportunity presents itself one must immediately act upon it. There is no greater danger than this because every moment another impediment may arise and inhibit one from fulfilling the mitzva." He quotes the above Midrash and seems to interpret it in the following light. Although Shlomo's reign was pre-ordained and promised to Dovid Hamelech it remained subject to human action or the lack of thereof. Every act of mitzva is subject to opposition and challenge and must be enacted as soon as possible. The mere fact that one is lax in fulfilling a mitzva gives rise to his forfeiting its opportunity. Hashem's promise to Dovid merely meant that opportunity will be made available for Shlomo to succeed his father. Whether this would actually transpire depended on numerous factors. The greatest of them was Dovid Hamelech's commitment to this promise and his deliberate action towards its realization.

True, Hashem's plan called for Shlomo to reign but it required human involvement to bring it to fruition. When the appropriate moment arrived Dovid Hamelech was expected to do everything within his power to secure Shlomo's reign. Any delay of Dovid Hamelech could have caused him to forfeit Hashem's promise. Similarly, B'nayahu and the Sanhedrin were required to execute the king's order as soon as possible. Any delay in their process could give rise to unknown impediments and render their mission quite difficult to fulfill. B'nayahu, the head of Sanhedrin understood this well and consequently expressed his sincere plea to Hashem. He asked that it should be Hashem's will that Dovid's loyal servants faithfully respond to their call thereby securing their efforts with success. (see Path of the Just ch. 7)

The Sages share with us a similar perspective about prayer and our false sense of security. Says Rabba bar Rav Shila, "One should daven to Hashem for a peaceful stay in this world up to the last bit of dirt thrown into his grave." (Mesichta Brachos 8a) The Sages are telling us that nothing is guaranteed in this world. One may enjoy a peaceful and tranquil life but things may drastically change during his last moments. In fact, even after one's life closes strife and quarrel can develop over his internment. One requires Hashem's assistance for virtually everything in life and afterwards and is not even guaranteed a peaceful burial. The Sages remind us that present predicaments are deceiving and should never be used to gauge the future. Our single answer is t'fila. After sincerely approaching Hashem we can at least hope that Hashem will respond and bring His intended plans to fruition.

This approach to Divine providence appears throughout this week's sedra. At the close of last week's sedra Hashem informed our Patriarch Avrohom that Yitzchok's ordained wife, Rivka was born. (see Rashi to Breishis 22:20) Avrohom waited until for her to mature and then engaged immediately in

securing this marriage. He summoned his devoted student and trustworthy servant Eliezer to fulfill this invaluable mission. He proceeded and bound Eliezer with an oath to faithfully adhere to his master's command. He sternly warned him to go directly to Avrohom's family in pursuit of a proper match and reiterated that under no conditions will Yitzchok marry a Canaanite lady or leave the land of Israel. Although Avrohom knew that Rivka was pre-ordained to marry Yitzchok he went to great lengths to secure this.

Indeed, the Sages reveal that Eliezer considered his daughter as an eligible candidate but Avrohom rejected the notion. Yet, this could give rise to Eliezer's bias and inhibit him from faithfully fulfilling his mission. Consequently Avrohom did everything in his power to secure that Yitzchok marry his pre-ordained spouse. (see Rashi ibid 24:39) True, Heaven decreed this marriage but this did not guarantee that it would happen. Who knows what could stand in the way and interfere with Hashem's proposal?! Avrohom therefore demanded from his trustworthy servant a heavy oath in attempt to secure his faithful fulfillment of his mission.

We learn from this the importance of capitalizing on our mitzva opportunities. They may often represent special privileges Hashem is granting us. However, such privileges are prone to opposition and impediments and we must therefore do all we can to secure their realization. As we have seen, the working formula for this is to immediately engage ourselves into action and pray to Hashem. After these we can hope that Hashem will respond favorably and bring His intended plans to fruition.

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