

The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash

Themes and Ideas in the Haftara Yeshivat Har Etzion

This haftara series is dedicated in memory
of our beloved Chaya Leah bat Efrayim Yitzchak
(Mrs. Claire Reinitz), *zichronah livracha*,
by her family.

CHAYYEI SARA

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL STYLE AND COMMON VALUES

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OPENING QUESTIONS REGARDING THE *HAFTARAH*

This week we will begin our analysis of the *haftara* (I *Melakhim* 1:1-31) with the series of questions raised already by the Malbim:

- 1) Why does the book of *Melakhim* open with an account of David's affairs during his old age and his instructions to Shelomo prior to his death? These stories should have been included in the book of *Shemuel* which is devoted to the life of David. That book should have recounted

the story of David's life up to and including the day of his death, and the book of *Melakhim* should have opened with the story of Shelomo.

2) What is the purpose of including the story of Avishag the Shunamite? And why are we told that David was old and that he was covered with clothes, but he did not become warm? What benefit do these stories provide?

3) Why did Adoniyahu decide to do what he did during his father's lifetime? Did he not know that his actions would arouse his father's anger, that he would fail to achieve his desired goal, that he would not draw all of Israel around him as was the case with Avshalom, but only Yoav and Evyatar, and that it would be preferable to wait until after his father's death and then do as he pleases?

THE KING IS DEAD – LONG LIVE THE KING

The Malbim's answer to the first question is simple, but critical for establishing the focus of the *haftara*. The death of a leader involves two stories, for it concludes one period and opens another. Inasmuch as "the king is dead, long live the king" aptly describes the situation that is created, we are dealing with two dramas:

1) The death of the first leader and the end of his reign.

2) The ascent of the new leader.

The conclusion of the first period leads of necessity to the beginning of a new period of leadership, for a changing of the guard is a necessary result of the demise of the previous leader. At such a time, society is faced by the challenge of an orderly transition of government, one that embraces both continuity and innovation. One who comes to deal with the issue from the second perspective of the ascent of the new leader, will not focus his account on the deceased leader, but rather on the affairs and intrigues of his successor. He will not dwell upon the past or upon an

assessment of the achievements of the late leader, but rather his eyes will be pointed forward to the new ruler and the new arrangements that he will bring with him.

Therefore, when we come to analyze an account of such a transition, we must examine whether the story focuses upon the death of the old leader and an assessment of his achievements, or upon the issue of the succession. Thus, for example, the impression that we get from an examination of *Parashat Chayyei Sara* and the story of the death of Avraham Avinu is that the focus of the story is not the death of Avraham, but rather the transition from Avraham to Yitzchak. The Torah dwells at length about the preparations that Avraham makes to hand down his material assets and spiritual legacy to Yitzchak, and the actions taken to ensure the exclusivity of Yitzchak. The actual story of the death and burial of Avraham is related in just a few, concise verses.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YAAKOV AND AVRAHAM

A comparison and contrast between chapter 25 of the book of *Bereishit* and chapters 49-50 which document the death of Yaakov well illustrate this point. The Torah prefers to emphasize different points in the accounts of the deaths of the two patriarchs. Yaakov's death focuses on his passing from the world and not on the question who of his sons will lead the next generation. There is a lengthy parting in which the sons assemble to receive their father's deathbed blessings and there is extensive occupation with the funeral arrangements, but Yaakov does not deal with the question of future leadership. Even the blessings are not intended to establish which of his sons would succeed him as leader, and to the extent that the blessings relate to the issue of leadership, we are dealing with the distant future. In our *parasha*, in contrast, there are no parting ceremonies or blessings, but only an arrangement of the affairs and the relationships between the brothers after Avraham will have left the world.

The reason for the difference seems to be clear. Avraham was the first of the patriarchs; the establishment of continuity and a mechanism to define his successor was critical for the foundation of his legacy. Without an heir, Avraham's life project would turn into a temporary project, and Avraham would not become the founder of a nation, but rather a private individual and a passing phenomenon. Yaakov, on the other hand, was not the first, but the last of the patriarchs. The most important element relating to his passing was not the issue of continuity, for there was no single successor who would step into his shoes as one of the patriarchs of the nation. On the contrary, the heart of the story is Yaakov's passing which symbolizes the conclusion of an era.

Our *haftara* also adopts the policy that we find in the book of *Bereishit*. David founded a dynasty; he was the first and foremost in relation to all who came after him. As in the account of the death of Avraham, David's old age and passing are related from the perspective of the selection of an heir (the *haftara* of *Parashat Chayyei Sara*) and the guidance provided him about his new role (the *haftara* of *Parashat Vayechi*). The issue of appointing a successor and the manner of his appointment is a critical issue for an inexperienced government – and indeed this is the focus of our *haftara*. The story is included in the book of *Melakhim* and not in the book of *Shemu'el* because its primary focus is not on the death of David but on **the selection of Shelomo** and the ramifications of that selection on the monarchy of Israel.

ADONIYAHU AND THE CROWN

In the *haftara*, as opposed to the Torah, the matters are not arranged in such a smooth fashion. The prophet presents us with a struggle and a conflict over the succession that accompanies the appointment of a successor. In order to understand the deeper meaning of the matter, and why the conflict was so bitter, we must analyze Adoniyahu's demand to ascend to the royal throne.

In brief, Adoniyahu demands the monarchy for himself, recruits a list of supporters from among the leading figures of the ruling regime and crowns himself king. We have already cited in our introduction the difficulties arising from a reading of this account. Two additional questions may be raised:

- 1) On what basis does Adoniyahu demand for himself the monarchy (that had been promised to one of his brothers)?

- 2) Why did Yoav and Evyatar lend him their support?

Of course, it is possible that a simple answer will resolve most of the difficulties, namely, that it was Adoniyahu's personal ambition that pushed him to desire the monarchy, to go ahead and seize it as soon as possible and persuade Yoav and Evyatar to join him by promising them

senior positions. It seems, however, that this is not the entire answer, but that a certain royal dynamic accompanies the entirety of his actions, one that he understood as justifying his demands.

In order to understand the matter, let us open with an attempt to understand the relationship between the recruitment of Avishag the Shunamite as the king's attendant and the story of the rebellion. Are we told about Avishag only to illustrate David's weakness?[1] If so, the Malbim's question, "What benefit do these stories provide," arises in all its intensity? We must, therefore, assume that Avishag fulfills the role here of a character who is involved in the development of the story, and her story serves as a sub-plot that contributes to the illumination of the plot as a whole and an understanding of its contents.

DAVID – ADINO HA-ETZNI

David is a complex character. On the one hand, he is full of vigor and activity. If we had to choose a single word to describe David, it would be: "energy." He is found in constant motion, lives an outdoor life, is always found in the camp leading his army, and never rests at home. Even at the end of his life, he still insists on going out with his warriors, and remains in his palace only after his men force him to do so (II *Shemuel* 21:16-17). His leadership is field leadership, and his personality flows with activity. This quality characterizes him throughout his life, and even after his monarchy is solidified, David remains engaged in war and actions documented throughout the book of II *Shemuel*.

In the realm of personal passion, as well, David is a stormy and tempestuous character. Of course, this quality finds expression in the story of David and Bat-Sheva, but *Chazal* did not see the intense passion evident in that incident as exceptional or uncharacteristic, but rather they assert (*Sanhedrin* 21a) that four hundred children were born to David from non-Jewish captives of war.[2]

On the other hand, David is not the heroic fighter whose entire being consists of hunting and waging war, for he is the sweet singer of Israel, who dreams of "dwelling in the house of Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His Temple" (*Tehilim* 27:4). The psalms of *Tehilim* reflect a religious experience connected with the field and nature, as would be expected from a man of the field, but they also leave room for the experience of the house of God and the Temple. In any event, they give expression to a world of holiness with all its

components, to the yearning of the creature for the Creator, of man for God via the Torah and *mitzvot*. The author of *Tehilim* 119 is not the courageous fighter-king familiar to us from the nations of the world, but rather a man of religion and Halakha who stands before God and fights His wars. As *Chazal* stated in their *derasha* regarding David (*Moed Katan* 16b) – "He is Adino ha-Etzni – when he sat and engaged in Torah, he made himself pliant [*me'aden*] like a worm, and when he went out to war, he stiffened himself like a tree [*etz*]." David lives in two worlds, but he knows how to combine both aspects of his life in the framework of his personality.

AVISHAG THE SHUNAMITE

The *haftara* opens with David's weakness. "Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he could not become warm" (1:1). The people see the vigorous king with whom they were familiar losing his vitality before their very eyes. The energy and vigor that were so characteristic of David are vanishing, and David appears to them as an old king bundled up in his clothes. From their perspective, this is not merely a personal tragedy of old age, but the loss of a leader, for his leadership was based on his energy. When the people and the royal advisors feel that their revered king is no longer the same person and that his leadership abilities have become impaired, they decide to bring Avishag for the purpose of restoring to David the vitality and energy familiar to them. This course of action, however, is doomed to failure, for David is truly old, and the hope to restore his vigor by stirring up his passions is unrealistic.[3] "And the maiden was very fair, and she attended the king, and ministered to him: but the king had no intimacy with her" (1:4). *Chazal* explained the fact that David had no intimacy with Avishag on halakhic grounds (see *Sanhedrin* 22a), but the plain sense of Scripture suggests that this was just another sign that David's powers had betrayed him. Abravanel already wrote in his commentary (*ad loc.*):

The story of Avishag the Shunamite is written here... to teach that David was old and very weak... And while by nature King David was a womanizer and drawn to sexual relations, he was already so deficient in his powers that he had no intimacy with her and did not draw close to her to lie with her... All this is indicative of his weakness and the deficiency of his powers and heart.

This model of an energetic leader living in the field with his forces is the only model of leadership familiar to the nation and its advisors. They perceived the role of the king as serving as the leader of the nation's armies, and saw the secret of the king's power as lying in his energy. The charisma required of a king was supposed to reflect these qualities and the success of the kingdom depended upon them. When David loses his powers and turns into a powerless old man,

the people feel that the ship has lost its captain. The episode involving Avishag – the attempt to stir up David's vital powers and prove to the people that the king has not lost his vigor – was an utter failure and only proved how great was the need for a new leader.

THE LEADERSHIP OF ADONIYAHU

Adoniyahu's attempt to crown himself as king during his father's lifetime is intricately connected to this point. He understands that when the time comes and the people will have to choose a new king, it is only natural that they will look for a successor who will express the qualities of fighting and energy that characterize David, for according to their understanding these are the secret of his success. Adoniyahu presents himself as the energetic leader who is fit to replace the erstwhile vigorous king whose powers have failed him, and consciously sets himself up against Shelomo. Adoniyahu wishes to present the people with two alternatives – a leader who is a man of the field, "a good looking man," who radiates strength and physical charisma, as opposed to a man whom Scripture characterizes as "a man of tranquility" (*I Divrei Ha-yamim* 22:9), and David himself describes as "young and tender" (*ibid.* v. 5).

The choice between these two models dictates the camps of supporters. Yoav follows Adoniyahu because his relationship to David was based on David's strength of spirit, and his loyalty towards him was the loyalty of a soldier to his commanding officer. The complex relationship between David and Yoav stemmed from the fact that Yoav connected to one aspect of David's personality and not to the entirety of his world, so that when David left the stage, Yoav supported the successor who would express the boldness that he recognized in David. Adoniyahu does not call upon Natan the prophet or Benayahu to join him, because their

relationship to David was based on his spiritual and religious components, which Adoniyahu did not represent.

It turns out then that the choice between Adoniyahu and Shelomo involved not only the selection of an heir, but also defining the very legacy of David. Choosing Adoniyahu meant seeing David's legacy as one of valiant fighter-officer, whereas the selection of Shelomo expressed the recognition that David's inner world and the essence of his personality was the world of holiness. Whereas Adoniyahu boasted that he would continue in David's footsteps in the field, Shelomo's primary project after he ascended to the throne was the construction of the Temple. David started with it and relied upon Shelomo that he would complete it (see *Divrei Ha-yamim, ibid.*), and it is in this that Shelomo saw the perpetuation of his father's legacy.

BETWEEN EARTHLY ACTIVITY AND SPIRITUAL INSPIRATION

In truth, the dilemma between these two options relates not only to David himself, but rather it underlies our entire understanding of the monarchy in Israel. At the heart of the laws of the king in the book of *Devarim* lies the tension between earthly activity and spiritual inspiration, between the world of royal intrigues and the world of the spirit. The instruction that a Torah scroll must accompany the king and direct all his ways indicates that the world of holiness is given preference to the world of activity as the focus of the monarchy. While the Torah speaks of glory and dominion and not of activity and charisma, the fundamental principle that the inner world of the king and his self-perception should be fashioned by the Torah is the same. The contrast between earthly military leadership and spiritual leadership accompanies the

entire book of *Shoftim*, with figures like Yiftach, Gidon and Shimshon expressing one end of the spectrum and Shemuel perceived as representing the other end. Chazal (*Rosh Hashana* 25b) expressed this idea well by creating a contrast between Moshe, Aharon and Shemuel, on the one hand, and Yiftach, Gidon and Shimshon, on the other, defining the first set as "heavyweights" and the latter set as "lightweights." Since the *haftara* deals with the first orderly transition of the monarchy, the nature of the selection is exceedingly significant for what lies ahead.

THE CROWNING OF ADONIYAHU

Adoniyahu's maneuver setting himself up as the active candidate for the crown also dictates the time and place of the coronation. The place is meant to radiate effusive energy and for that purpose he chooses a spring that symbolizes activity and renewal.

The choice of the time is an exceedingly important point. The laws pertaining to kings divide into two types of laws:

- 1) Laws relating to the role and office of the king.

- 2) Laws relating to the personal status of the king.

The first category is connected to the power of the government and the authority of the monarchy, and therefore it can be transferred to other non-monarchal governmental frameworks. The second category, however, is related to the person of the king, and its laws

are unique to the king – and very possibly only to the kings of the house of David – and not to other rulers. For example, the law that the king not multiply wives to himself, or the allowance given to the kings of the house of David to sit in the Temple courtyard, depends on the personality of the king and his personal status, but inquiring of the *Urim ve-Tumim* or the law of rebellion is connected to governmental power and authority, and not to the person of the leader. It is, at times, possible for there to be a split between these two components. A king who has retired or was removed from office is still considered a king from the perspective of his personal status, but not from the perspective of his authority,[4] and similarly regarding a king who was anointed but not yet appointed.[5] On the other hand, the judges mentioned in the book of *Shoftim* or the kings of the kingdom of Israel were invested with the powers that are subject to the laws of "kingdom," but they were not kings on the personal level and therefore the laws of "kings" did not apply to them. In the words of the Ramban, kings that are not of the house of David "don't have the majesty of kingdom, but are like judges and officers."

In light of what has been said above, it is easy to understand that Adoniyahu presents a fitting alternative to fill David's place from the perspective of functioning and authority, but not from the perspective of holiness and personal majesty. Shelomo, on the other hand, is a fitting heir to David on the personal level, but the nation is very liable to doubt his ability to lead the people and fill the shoes of David as a ruler. The change of the guard at the time that David ceased to function set functioning and authority at the center and not personal holiness. Therefore, it was so important for Adoniyahu to seize the rule the moment that David's weakness became manifest, and not to wait until his death. When David became old and ailing, and his weakness became evident and known to all, the people wanted a leader who presented himself as having David's leadership qualities. Adoniyahu's coronation at that point in time

when David no longer functioned sent out a message that was favorable to Adoniyahu. It is for this reason that he does not wait for David's passing. On the contrary, waiting for the death of the elderly leader would have sent out the message that the handing over of the crown depended on the person and not on the position of power, for the power disappeared with old age, and the king as a person continues as long as he is still alive. Just as the Halakha states that a Torah scholar who forgot what he had learned must still be shown respect, so too regarding a king. The respect and the status continue regarding their person and their holiness as an expression of a connection to the *Shekhina* even after they have ceased to function. Adoniyahu does not want to identify the termination of David's kingdom with the moment of his death, because from that perspective, Shelomo's advantage over him would be evident.

THE ATTITUDE OF SHELMO'S SUPPORTERS

Shelomo's supporters represent the opposite approach. According to them, David's heir must be a person whose values are identical to David's spiritual world and whose perception of the monarchy regarding the relationship between the world of holiness and the world of action set the Torah and holiness at the top. They, therefore, prefer Shelomo and refuse to follow after Adoniyahu.

But the question remains regarding Shelomo's ability to lead the people. Shelomo's supporters do not appear to be concerned about the differences between David and Shelomo. Without a doubt, they too understand that the king must lead and run the affairs of state, but they do not think that the monarchy must be built on a single principle and that there exists only one model of leadership. The times have changed, the needs are not the same, and the actors have

changed. Every age and every person has a style that is appropriate for the present situation. Shelomo's skills are different from those of David, but they are very appropriate for the new period about to be entered. Adoniyahu's position is defective not only with respect to spiritual insight, but also with respect to political insight. And indeed the choice made by those loyal to Shelomo proves right even from the governmental perspective.

From what we know about Shelomo's kingdom in the continuation, it may be argued that there are two things about which there is no doubt: First, Shelomo is, indeed, very different from David, and his monarchical style was absolutely different. And second, Shelomo also succeeded in leading and running a strong and stable state without going out to war or living in the field with his men. However, the primary issue that is open to discussion at the heart of the *haftara* is not connected to the question of a single model or multiple models of leadership, but rather the kingdom of David and an assessment of his achievements.

AVISHAG AND BAT-SHEVA

It seems then that the juxtaposition of the story concerning Avishag and the account of Adoniyahu's usurpation of the crown is meant to emphasize the shared idea of seeing David as a passionate and active leader. This is the reason that in the continuation of the *haftara* – alongside the conflict between Adoniyahu and Shelomo – the prophet presents a parallel contrast between Avishag and Bat-Sheva: "And Bat-Sheva went in to the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Avishag the Shunamite ministered to the king" (1:15). Avishag symbolizes the approach that sees the essence of David as an active doer, and her presence in the room is meant to emphasize that David's rule is over, whereas Bat-Sheva

recognizes David as a spiritual person who strives for holiness, and from her perspective he remains a significant factor. His rule has not been terminated, because David the person still exists and the sanctity of his kingship still hovers over him. Scripture, therefore, emphasizes the respect that she shows him as king, whom all are obligated to revere: "And Bat-Sheva bowed; and prostrated herself before the king" (1:16). Her style of speech and the manner in which she addresses him also illustrate the old king's continued kingship, and Natan the prophet also acts in a similar manner and for the same reasons: "And they told the king, saying, Behold Natan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself down before the king with his face to the ground" (1:23).

DAVID'S MORAL GREATNESS

Before concluding, let us devote a few words to the roles of Natan the prophet and Bat-Sheva. Thus far we have noted the contrast between Adoniyahu and Shelomo through the spectacles of Adoniyahu who recognizes the fact that Shelomo better represents David's world of sanctity, whereas he is more fitting for monarchy based on the image of fighter-leader. Even from this perspective, the balance is tilted in favor of Shelomo. This drama, however, contains another contrast which is revealed to us through the character of Bat-Sheva.

Bat-Sheva goes in to David and reminds him of his promise to appoint her son as king. This promise testifies to David's moral greatness and to his understanding of interpersonal relationships. The easiest thing that he could have done, and the wisest from a purely political perspective, was to ignore Bat-Sheva at the time, to deny her claims and remove her from his surroundings.[6] Without a doubt, his political advisors presented him with such a proposal.

David, however, does not choose the politically easy path, but prefers to assume personal responsibility toward another person. Disregarding her would have been easy, but morally corrupt.

The question of his assumption of responsibility for the fate of Bat-Sheva is critical for an evaluation of David's personality, for it will establish whether David relates to her as a worthy person whose human needs must be looked after or perhaps he saw her, God forbid, as a sexual object that may be exploited for his own needs. In other words, at the time of his sin did David succumb to a momentary weakness that does not impair his basic moral personality, or perhaps the incident involving Bat-Sheva teaches us the rule, testifying to a person who sees the other as destined to serve him?[7] Her marriage to David and the promise to appoint her son as his heir constitute a clear statement on the part of David that morality is more important to him than royal honor and personal prestige. Adoniyahu, in contrast, is associated by Scripture with Avshalom: "And he also was a very good looking man; and his mother bore him after Avshalom" (1:6). Avshalom, it may be remembered, slept with his father's concubines on the roof: "And Avshalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel" (II *Shemuel* 16:22). The comparison to David who also met Bat-Sheva on the roof begs to be made. The meeting between David and Bat-Sheva gave rise to a long-term relationship of mutual commitment and concern about each other, whereas Avshalom, in absolutely cynical manner, exploited the wretched concubines to advance his political objectives, leaving them shut up widows of a living husband to the day of their death. For him, they are absolute objects, and what will happen to them afterwards is of no interest to him whatsoever. The verse in the *haftara* associates Adoniyahu with his brother Avshalom; he too represents political desire and personal ambition[8] as opposed to the moral responsibility represented by Bat-Sheva.

Avishag's presence in the room when Bat-Sheva enters therein is meant to emphasize the contrast between the true wife who is in an I-thou relationship with David and the concubine who was brought to serve as an object. Bat-Sheva's presence is meant to emphasize that David is not the bold and passionate – but lacking personal responsibility – fighter, as Adoniyahu tried to present him, but rather the moral example of one who assumes responsibility for his actions. David's true might consists not of his actions on the battle field, but of the inner strength of one who recognizes his moral responsibility towards people he has hurt.

Bat-Sheva's cry at the end of the *haftara*, "Let my lord king David live for ever" (1:31), made in the presence of Avishag comes to establish that eternal life will be achieved through David's **moral legacy**. "I too was very beautiful in my youth, when David craved for me," argues Bat Sheva, "but today we are both old and advanced in years." Those who think that the secret of eternal life lies in rejuvenation and beautiful virgin girls suffer from illusions; neither Avishag nor any other virgin is capable of bringing David to eternal life. Both Avishag and David will go down into the grave and their flesh will turn into dust. The only thing that will survive the test of generations is a person's spiritual-moral image, and his legacy on earth will be established by a successor who is concerned about the moral dimension. David's morality and righteousness are what will bring him to eternal life, and because of them we can say, "David king of Israel lives forever."

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE *PARASHA* AND THE *HAFTARAH*

In conclusion, let us go back and discuss the connection between the *parasha* and the *haftara*. The common denominator between the two is not merely the old age and death of

Avraham which parallels the old age and death of David, but rather the situation in its entirety. In both cases, we are dealing with a leader who is establishing a dynasty, and the need arises for the first time to choose an heir. In both cases, the founding father is an active personality with many accomplishments, and in the running are two possible heirs who could be seen as following in the footsteps of the deceased. Avraham has Yishmael (and the sons of the concubines), who reflects his activity and mobility far more than the quiet and settled Yitzchak, and David has Adoniyahu as opposed to Shelomo. The choice between the two alternatives involves selecting what is fundamental as opposed to incidental in the deceased's legacy, that is to say, the moral and religious values that will be continued by the son who is quiet and different in nature as opposed to the activity and vigor that characterize the other son. Both in the *parasha* and in the *haftara*, the decision is clearly made in favor of morality and holiness, and thus we learn that the successor to family tradition or political leadership need not adopt the same **style** of leadership as his predecessor, but he must follow in the footsteps of the previous leader's **values**. It is the new leader's right and obligation to lead in accordance with the inclination of his heart and the needs of his generation, while preserving those basic values, but he need not adhere precisely to his predecessor's policies.

Moreover, Avraham's legacy is in the end preserved by way of Yitzchak. Without the ingathering project of Yitzchak, who grounded Avraham's achievements on firmer foundations, what had been done previously would not have endured.[9] It is precisely the difference in nature between Yitzchak and Avraham that allowed Yitzchak to fill in the missing element. We find the same model in David and Shelomo. Shelomo, who was so different in nature from David, establishes the kingdom and stabilizes it, and it is because of him that the

Davidic monarchy was not a one-time phenomenon, but a firmly established and enduring kingdom.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] The suggestion that we are told about Avishag as background to what is related in chapter two following the crowning of Shelomo, that Adoniyahu asked for her hand in marriage, is also not persuasive. The story of Avishag appears in a prominent spot at the beginning of the account, and it does not seem that mere background information would have been given such a prominent location. Also, as we shall see below, Avishag plays a dramatic role in the continuation of the *haftara* that has no importance as background for chapter two.

[2] Even if we accept the approach according to which round numbers like these are not necessarily precise, the principle is still valid and even more so, for an exaggeration is used to emphasize a characteristic trait. If so, *Chazal* stressed David's attraction to beautiful captive women as a character trait. The interesting suggestion proposed by Rabbi Reuven Margoliot in his book, "*Margaliyot Yam*" (*ad loc.*) that the number four hundred is a misunderstanding of the abbreviation using the letter *taf*, which was meant to note nine (*tisha*) beautiful captive women (following what may be inferred from a verse in *Divrei Ha-yamim*), but was understood as standing for the number four hundred, does not detract from the assertion that David was attracted to beautiful captives in a major way.

[3] There are those who understand that it was Adoniyahu's intention to demonstrate David's weakness, thereby justifying his own course of action. This too is certainly a reasonable interpretation.

[4] See *Yerushalmi, Horayot* 3:2.

[5] See *Megila* 14b.

[6] Has anybody recently seen Monica Lewinsky in the company of Bill Clinton?

[7] In this context, *Chazal (Bava Metzia 59a)* drew a contrast between David who may have been overcome by a momentary weakness, but was concerned about his fellow man as a person, and his detractors who may never have sinned in sexual matters, but cause injury to him and others without consideration for the person under attack: "Rava expounded: What is that which is written: 'And when I stumbled, they rejoiced and gathered themselves together... they tore me, and did not cease' (*Tehilim* 35:15)? David said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that if they had torn my flesh, my blood would not have dripped to the ground. And not only [this], but even when they engage in the laws of *Nega'im* and *Ohalot*, they say to me: David, what is the death [penalty] for someone who cohabits with a married woman? And I say to them: His death is by strangulation, but he has a share in the world-to-come. But someone who puts his fellow to shame in public does not have a share in the world-to-come."

[8] "And his mother bore him after Avshalom" (1:6). Just as this one acquired for himself chariots and riders, so this one. Just as this one is creates controversy, so this one creates controversy. Just as this one has fifty runners before him, so this one" (*Yalkut Shimoni* 166).

[9] This is not the forum to expand upon this idea. An additional *shiur* would be required to prove it from Scripture.

(Translated by David Strauss)