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ON THE WEEKLY *TORAH* PORTIONS, FESTIVALS,
AND SPECIAL DATES

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FROM THE SACRED WORKS OF

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SUMMARY OF ALL SECTIONS

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1. The *haftorah*'s unfinished story

There are two customs for the length of the *haftorah* for *Chayei Sarah*. The shorter reading ends with Bas Sheva's words, "May my lord King David live forever" (*Melachim I* 1:31). The longer reading continues through Shlomo's anointing and accession (*Melachim I* 1:46). Both begin with David's old age, paralleling Avraham's old age in the *parshah*. Why, according to either custom, does the reading extend beyond that opening parallel to the succession of David's kingship?

The *parshah* offers a broader connection: Avraham secures a wife for Yitzchak, through whom Avraham's household will continue. Yet Avraham also has other descendants, whose families the Torah records. The *haftorah* instead concentrates on Shlomo as David's successor. How does that difference fit the connection between the readings?

The shorter reading raises a further question: why end with the wish that David live forever when the narrative concerns his approaching death and Shlomo's succession? The longer reading raises a related question: what does Shlomo's anointing contribute to the connection with the *parshah*? These questions require examining what that anointing accomplished.

Selected footnote. The opening parallels are Avraham's old age (*Bereishis* 24:1) and David's old age (*Melachim I* 1:1). Source notes 25–29 record differing customs concerning the reading's endpoint.

2. Why anoint a king who already inherits?

The Talmud (*Kerisos* 5b; *Horayos* 11b) teaches that a king's son ordinarily inherits kingship without anointing. Shlomo, however, faced Adoniyahu's challenge. According to Rashi (*Kerisos* 5b, s.v. *bizman*), a disputed succession requires anointing to establish the heir's kingship itself. The dispute prevents inheritance alone from establishing Shlomo's kingship; the anointing is therefore needed to make him king.

According to Rambam (*Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* 1:11), Shlomo's kingship itself is already established by inheritance. The anointing removes the dispute and makes his existing kingship known to everyone. Thus, for Rashi, the anointing establishes Shlomo's kingship itself; for Rambam, it publicly affirms Shlomo's existing kingship. On Rambam's view, why does the *haftorah* include an anointing that merely removes opposition? Even the shorter reading includes preparations for that anointing. Either endpoint therefore calls for a deeper explanation.

Selected footnote. Rambam's account expressly names the anointing of Shlomo, David's oath, and Shlomo's future occupation of David's throne (*Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* 1:11).

3. Two different accounts of the same anointing

The Talmud (*Megillah* 14a) explains that Shaul remained king while David's anointing was not yet publicly known. At first, that seems inconsistent with Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim* 1:7): once David was anointed, he acquired the crown of kingship for himself and his descendants forever. If anointing itself confers that enduring right, how could David still lack the standing of a reigning king?

A related question arises within Rambam's own writings. In *Hilchos Melachim* (1:12), he explains the anointing of Shlomo and other disputed heirs as a means of removing opposition and identifying the rightful king. Why repeat that explanation in *Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* (1:11), where the subject is the sacred anointing oil? His normal precision suggests that each placement addresses a different aspect of the act.

Selected footnote. Source note 35 distinguishes the account in *Megillah* from the formulation in *Sanhedrin* 20b, where Shaul and Shlomo are associated with a royal crown and David with an anointing flask. The distinction must be read in its particular context.

4. Royal office and the crown of David

The two discussions serve different purposes. In *Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* (1:7, 11), Rambam treats anointing as a law of royal appointment, including the anointing used to remove opposition to an heir's existing kingship. In *Hilchos Melachim* (1:7–12), the focus includes a further distinction: David acquired a **crown of kingship** that belongs permanently to his family. The question is therefore why publicly affirming Shlomo's existing kingship also expresses something distinctive about David's dynasty.

Other Jewish kings can be legitimately appointed by a prophet. Yet their kingship differs from the kingship of David's descendants. Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim* 1:8–9) states that David's dynasty endures forever, whereas the rule of other dynasties eventually ceases. His conclusion to the positive *mitzvos* in *Sefer HaMitzvos* similarly identifies faith in kingship from David's line as a foundation, while describing a king from another family as a foreigner in relation to that enduring royal house. What makes David's kingship inherently permanent, rather than merely another hereditary office?

Selected footnote. The legitimacy of another dynasty is illustrated by Achiyah's appointment of Yeravam (*Hilchos Melachim* 1:8). Legitimate appointment does not make that dynasty equivalent to David's enduring royal house.

5. An inherited identity, beyond the exercise of rule

David's descendants differ from other kings in the nature of their royal standing, even when they do not actually govern all Israel. An ordinary king becomes king through appointment and the exercise of his office. David's anointing established kingship within David himself and his descendants as an enduring identity. Actual rule can therefore be interrupted without extinguishing the royal standing of David's house.

This explains Rambam's distinction between a king from another tribe and a descendant of David (*Hilchos Melachim* 1:8–9). Even when another king rules, kingship in its primary sense remains David's. The same distinction appears in Rambam's description of belief in David's dynasty: recognizing the enduring crown of David is more than acknowledging that David and his descendants once held royal office. Their kingship has a permanence that an ordinary appointment cannot create.

Selected footnote. Source note 55 observes that a king of Yehudah is not brought the special royal offering when a king of Israel limits his supremacy (*Horayos* 11b). Nevertheless, that limitation on present authority does not erase the distinct standing of David's house.

6. What sacred anointing makes permanent

Why is the sacred anointing oil reserved for David's dynasty? The oil made by Moshe remains in existence forever (*Kerisos* 5b; *Shemos* 30:31). Its permanence is reflected in what its anointing accomplishes. Anointing the Sanctuary vessels consecrated them for future generations; anointing David likewise established enduring kingship in David and his descendants (Rambam, *Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* 1:12; *Hilchos Melachim* 1:7).

A son of David ordinarily needs no anointing because David's anointing already established kingship in his descendants. A dispute does not remove that inherited kingship. When the disputed heir is anointed, the anointing publicly affirms the enduring kingship that he already possesses; it does not establish his kingship itself. This explains Rambam's fuller wording in *Hilchos Melachim* (1:12), "to make known to everyone that he **alone** is king." The word **alone** identifies the enduring quality distinctive to David's dynasty, even when another legitimate king rules elsewhere. David could thus possess the crown before exercising public royal authority, resolving the earlier difficulty concerning Shaul.

Selected footnote. Source note 64 clarifies that the permanence of consecration applies to kingship as well: the kings of David's house 'endure forever.' Source note 66 discusses why Rambam places Elisha's anointing of Yehu with balsam oil at the end of the chapter (*Hilchos Klei HaMikdash* 1:11).

7. Shlomo's anointing completed David's kingship

The Talmud (*Megillah* 14a) specifically associates David and Shlomo with anointing from a horn. Although Shlomo inherited David's crown, his anointing disclosed the enduring kingship that had begun with David. Rambam therefore connects the crown of David with Shlomo and makes the permanence of David's dynasty particularly explicit in relation to Shlomo (*Hilchos Melachim* 1:7; *Peirush HaMishnayos*, *Sanhedrin*, introduction to chapter 10, twelfth principle).

Shlomo's anointing was no mere repetition of David's. G-d's original promise to David already specified that Shlomo would build the Temple and that Shlomo's throne would be established forever (*Divrei HaYamim I* 22:9–10). Shlomo was chosen from David's sons to occupy G-d's throne over Israel (*Divrei HaYamim I* 28:4–5). Thus, the **completion** of David's permanent kingship came through Shlomo. For that reason, the Talmud's statement that David and Shlomo were anointed from a horn treats both anointings as expressions of the same enduring dynasty.

Selected footnote. Source note 73 explains that the horn and flask correspond to different oils: a horn is associated with sacred anointing oil, whereas a flask is associated with balsam oil. The source also notes that Shaul was not anointed with the sacred oil; see source note 59.

8. An enduring promise and an enduring people

The *haftorah* now has a clear subject. Bas Sheva's wish that David 'live forever' (*Melachim I* 1:31) affirms the permanence of David's kingship, which Shlomo's succession will bring to completion. That permanence does not depend on uninterrupted good conduct by every descendant. Even when David's descendants sin and are punished, G-d's covenant with David is not annulled (Rambam, *Hilchos Melachim* 1:7; *Tehillim* 89:31–35).

The same pattern explains the connection to the *parshah*. G-d's choice of Avraham gives Israel an enduring identity. Yitzchak and Yaakov transmit that identity to every Jew throughout the generations; the other branches of Avraham's family do not share that role. Yitzchak's continuation of Avraham's household gives concrete expression to the promise that Avraham's enduring descendants will be identified through Yitzchak (*Bereishis* 21:12). The process reaches completion with Yaakov, whose children all belong to Israel. Accordingly, some communities end the *haftorah* before Shlomo's actual accession: the *parshah* likewise presents the foundations of the enduring people before the process is complete.

Selected footnote. *Tanya* (chapter 18), cited in source notes 81 and 84, explains how the Patriarchs transmitted a holy spiritual inheritance to their descendants. G-d's choice of Avraham is expressed in *Nechemyah* 9:7.

9. Kingship unites the people for the Divine presence

The connection extends beyond parallel histories. A people reaches its fullness when its members form one collective body. The *mitzvah* to appoint a king establishes leadership that gathers and directs the nation together (Rambam, *Sefer HaMitzvos*, positive *mitzvah* 173). The choice of David and Shlomo therefore brings G-d's choice of Israel into fuller expression: through their enduring kingship, the people become a united nation under G-d's kingship.

That unity is bound to the Temple. G-d chose David and Shlomo in connection with preparing and building His house (*Melachim I* 8:16; *Divrei HaYamim I* 28–29). The choice of David's dynasty and the construction of the Temple led Israel to rest and settled inheritance, where the Divine presence dwells. Thus, the enduring identity of Israel, begun with Avraham and transmitted through the Patriarchs, finds fulfillment through David and Shlomo in the building of the Temple: a lasting dwelling for the Divine presence among the Jewish people.

Selected footnote. The Temple is a place of Divine rest (*Divrei HaYamim I* 22:9; *Tehillim* 132:14). Rambam describes the Temple's enduring sanctity in *Hilchos Beis HaBechirah* 1:3; source note 95 directs attention to the permanence of the Divine presence.