



PROBING

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

THE PROPHETS

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Over the past years, I shared with you the contrasting depiction of King David's final days as described in our haftarah taken from Sefer M'lachim with that found in Sefer Divrei HaYamim A. However, I rarely (if at all) chose to contrast Avraham's final days with those of David, as the differences are certainly understandable, given the gap of hundreds of years between the two lives and the resulting challenges they faced. In the parasha, we confront an aging patriarch choosing a fitting partner for his son who would successfully carry on his own life's work, while in the haftarah, we face a weakened regent struggling to crown a successor to sit on his throne. Both had to prepare for the future – one, for his family, one for his nation.

But when we pause to study the saga of David, we might rightfully wonder about his choice of successor. Shlomo was a young man of perhaps 12 years or 16 years of age, a rather tender age to take on such a weighty position. Indeed, when we read the haftarah and the attempted coup of Adoniyahu, David's oldest surviving first-born (from the King's wives), we see that he had gathered a large and impressive following - including many of the nation's influential leaders. People like Yoav, David's long-time chief-of-staff, and Evyatar, the former Kohen Gadol, supported Adoniyahu's attempt to usurp the throne from the elderly King. And one can

well understand why they did so!!!!

Consider: David was weakening, he could not even keep himself warm and, it seems, hardly left the palace - indeed, the text lets us know that he knew very little of what was taking place outside. It was crucial for the nation of Israel to have a leader, and a young teenage boy was hardly a proper choice - especially when there was an experienced older prince who was far more fitting for the job!! Additionally, there is absolutely NO mention – in all of Sefer M'lachim – of Hashem's choice of Shlomo to succeed David (it is found only in Sefer Divrei HaYamin A) and perhaps very few knew of G-d's promise to David – including those who hoped to crown Adoniyahu! So why were they wrong in attempting to place Adoniyahu on the throne??

Well, they were wrong for a very good reason!!! As we read of the invitees to Adoniyahu's "coronation", we also read of those who were NOT invited and we discover that, although **all** of the princes were invited, Shlomo was **not invited** (see v. 10). Indeed, it seems that they knew very well of David's choice of Shlomo – but they didn't care.

David had seen his sons vie for his throne throughout his life. He saw his eldest, Amnon, ravish Tamar, David's daughter, with no fear of retribution - he was, after all, the crown prince. Avshalom, the next son, murders Amnon, starts a civil war and usurps the royal throne, even

attempting to assassinate his own father. And now, at the end of his days, David sees Adoniyahu and some of his highest officers, trying to take over the throne.

David knows very well what is happening. David knows why – because he had seen this before.

As in past years, David HaMelech sees people who want to win. They care for position, they care for fame, they care for power....but they don't care for the nation. He recognizes individuals who are willing to defy the king, ignore the majority and divide the people so that they can rise to power. That is why Yoav, whom David had removed from his generalship, and Evyatar, who also lost his High Priesthood, joined the coup.

They wanted their power back!!

And when people are willing to divide a united nation, when they are thirsty to “win”, when they care for themselves more than they care for their nation....they can never be allowed to “take the throne.”

We have seen in our own time how different views can lead to dividing a nation if there is no common discussion and no compromise. We, who now stand united as perhaps never before, must be careful to remember the painful months, even years, of incessant bickering and splintering of our people.

After G-d helps us defeat the forces of pure evil, IY”H, we must make sure that our leaders will care for the nation more than they care for themselves and that they will talk to each other even when they disagree with each other and will work to insure the rift that was will never appear again.

In short, it is time to place Shlomo, Shalom, upon the throne. ■



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