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שופטים תשע"ט Shoftim

• זרע שמשון הלימוד שמשפיע ישועות •

עליון 53

## אמרות שמשון

### Why Shaul Should Not Have Remained Silent in The Face of His Antagonists

שום תשים עליך מלך אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו וגו' (יז טו)

*You shall set over yourself a king whom Hashem shall choose...*

The Gemara in Yuma (כב ע"ב) discusses what it was that caused the great and Holy Shaul Hamelech to ultimately lose his kingship. Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: *Why was Shaul punished [that his monarchy did not endure]? Because he renounced his honor, as it is stated: 'And the vile men said; "How can this person save us?" And they ridiculed him, and did not bring him a tribute, but he remained silent'.*

When Shaul was anointed as king over the Jewish nation, there were those who refused to accept his sovereignty and even spoke mockingly of him, yet Shaul, in his humility, did not assert himself and avoided speaking out against his detractors. When Shaul behaved in this manner, although it stemmed from his positive virtue of humility, nevertheless as king he ought to have defended the honor of his crown, not forgiving any slight to his honor; for the honor of a kingship isn't the king's personal honor, but rather the honor of the Nation whom he represents. Thus, as king of the Jewish nation, Shaul was to have upheld the honor of his people.

Additionally, the Gemara in Yuma continues and says the following. *Any Torah Scholar who does not take revenge or bear a grudge like a snake is not a true Torah scholar [for an insult to him is perceived as an insult to the Torah that he represents].* When Shaul did not respond to those who ridiculed him, aside from failing to maintain the honor of the nation that he represented, he also did not stand up to the task of a Torah scholar, to uphold the honor of the Torah. It was these two shortcomings which ultimately cost him his kingship.

It would seem that we can explain and defend Shaul's silence in both regards, and therefore it is hard to comprehend why this silence cost him his sovereignty.

Regarding Shaul not maintaining the honor of the kingship, because this episode occurred so soon after his anointment, it clearly indicated that his authority was not yet unanimously accepted, and therefore he had no choice but to be tolerant with the people until they would concede

and defer to his authority. This very piece of advice, to be tolerant until the kingship is steadfast and accepted by the masses, is what the Elders counseled Shlomo Hamelech's son, Rechavam, many years later, and indeed, when Rechavam disregarded their counsel, most of the Nation rebelled and never accepted his sovereignty.

Likewise, regarding Shaul not standing up for the honor of the Torah, it is also hard to understand where he fell short. For the Gemara clearly concludes and explains that this doesn't mean that when a Torah scholar is insulted or disgraced he should respond in revenge, rather he should keep the matter in mind, and indeed, although Shaul did not respond, he did evidently keep the matter in mind, as the Passuk says, ויהי כמתריש, which literally translates, 'he remained akin to a silencer', which clearly infers that although Shaul was silent, it wasn't a total silence, for in his mind he kept the matter alive.



We may explain Shaul's shortcomings as follows. When the elders advised Rechavam to go easy with his subordinates until his authority would be resolute, it was only because Hashem had explicitly told his father, Shlomo Hamelech, that after he will die his kingship would not inevitably be passed on, in its entirety, to his son, and therefore, in order to gain a stronghold on an unwavering and loyal segment of the Nation, the Elders advised him to go easy with the people until they would voluntarily accept his authority. This notion clearly did not apply to Shaul Hamelech, to whom Hashem had distinctly given the kingship. Shaul thus had no need to win anyone over, and therefore had no reason to be overly forgiving with the people, but rather should have asserted his kingship and authority immediately. When he didn't do so, he essentially slighted the honor of his sovereignty, which ultimately cost him the kingship.

In regards to the proper behavior of a Torah scholar bearing a grudge, although the Gemara does indeed say that the Torah scholar should not take any positive action against his antagonist, but should rather merely keep the matter in mind, nevertheless Rashi clearly states that what it means to 'keep the matter in mind' is that he should allow others to avenge his honor. When Shaul's loyalists said regarding his antagonists, "Give the men over and we will put them to death", and Shaul replied "Let no man be put to death this day", he essentially fell short of his responsibilities as a Torah scholar to let others avenge his honor.

We can now understand the flaw that lay within Shaul's silence which, as Chazal teach us, is what prevented his monarchy from enduring.

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