

## This Week's Parshah - Parshas Mikeitz

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of  
 Moshe Aharon *ben Gedalyah a''h*  
 a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his *neshamah*

### The Royalty of the Chashmona'im

Would you like to be president of the United States? This has been the enduring dream of countless millions of people. Putting aside the fact that a good percentage of actual White House residents were only too happy to leave at their term's end, the attainment of this high office is considered the crowning achievement of a lifetime. The glory and prestige that go with it make this position perhaps the most coveted in the world.

#### King for a Day...

Of course, there was a time when the prevalent leadership role in most countries was that of absolute monarch. Imagine the grandeur experienced by actually being a king! The wealth, splendor and power of these sovereigns was legendary.

At least, this is how most of the world views it. One would have thought that the great men of Yisrael, with their elevated perspectives, would not harbor aspirations of such pomp and glory.

And yet, it appears that this was indeed the case. Take David and Shlomoh, for instance: men of unparalleled spirituality and Torah wisdom. At the same time, they greatly valued *malchus* (kingship) and sought to acquire and retain royal power. How could such pristine, sacred souls be so desirous of the epitome of earthy glory and material wealth and power?

We can gain some insight by focusing on the Chashmona'im (Hasmoneans), the family that figured so prominently in the Chanukah story.

#### Beginning of the Dynasty

The events associated with the Chanukah story are recorded in the Gemara in Shabbos (21b):

“When the Greeks entered into the Temple, they defiled all the oil within the Sanctuary. When Malchus Beis Chashmona'i (the regime of the House of the Chashmona'im) became ascendant and prevailed over the enemy, they then conducted a search (in the Temple) but could only find one flask of oil... which had only enough lighting power to kindle the Menorah for a single day. A miracle was wrought through it, and they were able to light with this oil for eight days...”

As well-known as this narrative is, it does contain a somewhat surprising statement concerning the chronology of events. Chazal are always quite particular in their wording. Notice how they refer to this small band of fighters who took on the formidable enemy: “When Malchus Beis Chashmona'i... prevailed over the enemy...” They are being called “Malchus Beis Chashmona'i” even as they were still engaged in the struggle! Our usual understanding is response to the persecutions of the Greek regime, the family of Chashmona'im waged a lopsided war, which they miraculously won. In the aftermath of their improbable victory and the miracle of the Menorah, they established their own reign, as dominion once again returned to Yisrael. From the Gemara's

description, however, it seems that they were already considered “Malchus Beis Chashmsona’i,” and *then* they vanquished the enemy!

Based on the teachings of the Alter from Kelm, R’ Yeruchim Olshin (*Yerach L’mo’adim, ma’amar 33*) elucidates the issue by examining the Torah’s perspective of “*malchus*.”

### Sharing and Bearing the Burden

Of course, the Alter explains, the righteous David and Shlomoh were not interested in the ephemeral trappings of riches and glory. Their desire for *malchus* stemmed not from base ambition, but from a truly altruistic yearning for a much more substantial entity. That is, they sought to perform *chessed* (kindness) for their fellow Jews. The power and status of kingship would enable them to reach the maximum number of people, helping them in the most optimal way possible. Indeed, they excelled in the *middah* (attribute) of “*nosei b’ol im chaveiro*” – bearing the burden of one’s neighbor with him. The Alter terms this particular *middah* as the “*k’lil hama’alos*” – the supreme value. Dovid and Shlomoh empathized with the needs of the entire Jewish community and sought to alleviate their travails.

The Mishnah in Sanhedrin (2:8) relates some laws that pertain to the king:

אֵין רוֹכְבִין עַל סוּסוֹ, וְאֵין יוֹשְׁבִין עַל כִּסֵּאוֹ, וְאֵין מְשַׁתְּמְשִׁין בְּשֵׁרְבִיטוֹ, וְאֵין רוֹאִין אוֹתוֹ כְּשֶׁהוּא מְסַתְּפֵר.

“One may not ride on (the king’s) horse, nor sit on his throne, nor use his scepter, nor view him as his hair is being cut.”

These are some examples of the honor that we must accord the king. While it might almost seem obvious, the question can be raised: Why, in fact, must we honor a king? Is it because of his power? His vast wealth? The Alter from Kelm asserts that the honor due a king stems from the very trait discussed above. It is because he possesses and exercises this most admirable of all traits – being *nosei b’ol im chaveiro* that he deserves such respectful treatment.

This, explains R’ Yeruchim, is the intent behind the Gemara’s characterization of “Malchus Beis Chashmona’i.” Of course, their actual reign began only after the enemy was vanquished and deposed. When the Gemara states that it was Malchus Beis Chashmona’i that waged the war and defeated the Greeks, it is not referring to the established regime. Rather, the Gemara is referring to the *attribute* of *malchus*, the quality that the Chashmona’im assumed in their efforts to deliver their brethren.

In other words, the Gemara’s intent is that in undertaking the campaign, the Chashmona’im were *behaving* like royalty. As we have learned, the quintessential monarch, in the Torah’s perspective, is one whose focus is not on his palatial estates or his vast treasures; he does not view his crown as a personal achievement, the realization of a dream of the ultimate grandeur. Rather, he effectively annuls his own self, devoting his strength and resources to helping his people. And this was the approach that the Chashmona’im adopted, putting themselves at great risk for the sole purpose of being *nosei b’ol* with the nation, seeking their safety and deliverance. They utilized the quality of “*malchus*” in order to fight against the enemy. Hashem smiled upon their efforts, delivering through them a miraculous victory on behalf of His people.

