

## Developing our Feminine Attribute of Binah

### *Haftorat Parashat Chayei Sarah*

#### *1 Melachim, Chapter 1:1-31*

*These last few Haftorot are so inspiring and jam-packed with stories of heroic women. From our haftorah, we learn that it is specifically by developing our feminine attribute of "binah" that we can have an impact on the world, giving birth to the cosmic redemption. Learning about how the Davidic line was ensured by the special binah of Rivka and Bat Sheva, inspires us to develop this quality in ourselves to build our homes and thereby the Jewish Nation.*

### Women Determine the Lineage of G-d's Selected People

This week's *Haftorah*, from the beginning of the Book of Kings, describes how the true lineage of King David is assured. This parallels the Torah reading of *Parashat Chayei Sarah* which describes the selection of Rivkah who ensured that Ya'acov received the birthright, and thereby became the carrier of the spiritual mission of his fathers. Just as Rivkah who understood the true nature of her sons, took action to ascertain that only the worthy son received his father's blessing, Bat-Sheva too, convinced King David to crown her son Shlomo. The connection between the Torah reading and its *haftorah* teaches us about the important role of women in determining the lineage of G-d's selected people. Even if the kings are men, their kingship is totally dependant on women, without whom Hashem's chosen king, would never be able to reign.

### Binah – The Ability to Distinguish

What gives women this ability to discern the true heir of G-d's spiritual mission and bring about his selection? Women are known to have *binah yeterah* (*Midrash Rabah, Bereishit 18:1*). This term is usually translated as "extra intuition." The root of the word *binah* is connected with the word *bein* which means between. *Binah*, therefore, entails the ability to distinguish between different or opposing matters. It is this quality that gave both Rivkah and Bat-Sheva the ability to clearly discern who Hashem had selected to be the successor of their husbands. Likewise, the attribute of *binah* is required for taking the necessary steps in order to ensure that only the son who is worthy becomes the next in line. Through her exceptional *binah*, Rivkah understood that being direct with her husband would not accomplish her goal. However, every man and situation is different. By employing the quality of *binah*, Bat-Sheva knew how to explain the matter directly to King David, in a way that would convince him. Malbim notes, for example, that Bat-Sheva omitted mentioning how the rival king Adonyahu had invited all King David's servants to his coronation. This was in order not to discourage her husband and make him fear a revolt. On the contrary, she empowered him by emphasizing how the eyes of all Yisrael were upon David, relying on him to choose his successor (*1 Melachim 1:20*). This encouragement was especially important at that time, when David was lying on his deathbed, and may have lacked the strength to take action, if not for the support of his devoted wife. Thus, without Bat-Sheva the Davidic dynasty may not have been established.

### The Son of Chagit

How did Adonyahu have the chutzpah to get himself crowned during his father's lifetime, and

disregard the prophecy that Hashem had selected Shlomo as the next king? The verse states about Adonyahu "...he also was a very good looking man; and his mother bore him after Avshalom" (1 *Melachim* 1:6). Yet, it mentioned in the previous verse that Adonyahu's mother was Chagit, whereas Avshalom's mother was Ma'akah (2 *Shemuel* 3:3). Rashi explains that although Adonayhu had a different mother than Avshalom, the verse connects them because Chagit raised Adonyahu in the same way that Ma'akah raised Avshalom. It is likely that the mothers' emphasis on external appearance and self-indulgence caused both of these sons to become self-centered and power-greedy. In addition to being handsome and charismatic, Adonyahu was able to assemble a large group of followers, because many people doubted whether it was permissible to crown Shlomo as the next king. Since David's initial relation with Bat-Sheva was problematic, they were questioning whether Bat Sheva's offspring was fit to sit on the throne.

### Perfect Repentance Through Avishag the Shunamite

The beginning of the Book of Kings comes to verify that King Shlomo indeed is King David's rightful successor. This is why the Book of Kings begins with the bizarre story about how a beautiful virgin is brought to warm David during his old age (1 *Melachim* 1:1-4). My teacher at Michlaha, Rav Carmel, explained that in order for Shlomo to become the next king, David had to prove that he indeed had repented from the incidence with Bat-Sheva. Although David shared his bed with the most beautiful young virgin in the whole country, "The king had no intimacy with her" (1 *Melachim* 1:4). Since David already had eighteen wives – the maximum allowed for a king – he held himself back from living with Avishag the Shunamite, in spite of her beauty and closeness to him. This proves that David had attained the highest level of repentance – *teshuvat hamishkal* – which requires overcoming the desire to sin despite being in the exact same situation with equally powerful temptations as when originally committing the transgression.

### Even during Old Age – A Man Remains a Man

Perhaps David had now become old and weak, no longer having the same desire, as many years ago, when he first spotted Bat-Sheva bathing on the roof? This is indeed Avishag's argument to David, when he refuses to marry her. The Talmud asks: What are the facts regarding Avishag? – It is written, "King David was old, stricken in years..." (1 *Melachim* 1:1). Further it is written, "They sought for him a beautiful maiden..." (Ibid. 3); and it is written, "And the maiden [Avishag] was very beautiful, and she attended the king and ministered unto him" (Ibid. 4). She said to him, 'Let us marry,' but he [David] said, 'You are forbidden to me.' 'When courage fails the thief, he becomes virtuous,' she mocked. Then he said to them [his servants], 'Call me Bat-Sheva' "And Bat-Sheva went to the king into the chamber" (1 *Melachim* 1:15). Rav Yehudah said in Rav's name, 'On that occasion Bat-Sheva dried herself thirteen times' [i.e. they had consecutive intercourse] (*Sanhedrin* 22a). This anecdote clearly shows that David had indeed repented in the very highest way, and that it was not because he was too old that he held himself back from taking Avishag. It, moreover, teaches us that women should not be lax in *tzniut* (modesty) just because a man is very old. No matter how old, a man is still a man!

### Bat-Sheva's Role in Bringing the Mashiach

Bat-Sheva gets the last word in this week's Haftorah as she blesses King David, "Let my lord King David live forever" (1 *Melachim* 1:31). The Brisker Rav (Rabbi Yitzchak Zev HaLevi Soleveitchik) asks

why Bat-Sheva only uttered this blessing now and not beforehand. He explains, according to Rambam (*Perek Chelek*, 12), that Mashiach must come from the house of David and specifically from the seed of King Shlomo, as it states "...He has chosen Shlomo my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of Hashem over Israel...I will establish his kingdom forever... (1 *Divrei Hayamim* 28:5-6). Only through the selection of Shlomo is the eternal house of David established. Therefore, David's promise to Bat Sheva, that "Indeed, your son Shlomo shall reign after me" (1 *Melachim* 1:30), laid the foundation for his everlasting royal lineage, culminating in the Mashiach, as his direct descendant. This explains why Bat-Sheva could only bless David with eternal life, after he had sworn to crown Shlomo. From this we learn about Bat Sheva's impact on the Messianic lineage, and her keen awareness of the importance of Mashiach who was to descend from the relationship between her and King David. Likewise, today, we women are the movers and shakers in bringing about the final sprout of David.