
What Does the King Want When the Battle Is Over?

Friday night of Shemini Atzeres | Sukkos / Simchas Torah 5787
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An Eighth Guest?

For seven days of Sukkos, we have welcomed the seven ushpizin into the sukkah: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and David. Each is associated with one of the seven middos. David, the seventh, represents malchus.

Seven days. Seven guests. Seven middos. That should complete the list. Yet the Rebbe of Peshischa says that Shemini Atzeres has an ushpiz too: **Shlomo HaMelech**.

How can Shlomo be the eighth guest? Is there an eighth middah after David's malchus? And why, on this eighth day, have we put down the arba minim that were in our hands throughout Sukkos?

What Were We Carrying Into Battle?

Earlier this Sukkos, in "What Does the King Want After the Victory?", we pictured soldiers returning from battle. The visible sign of victory was the spear held in the victor's hand. So too, after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we emerge with the lulav in our hands. Everyone can see what we carry.

In that drash, the king's soldiers had different motives. Some loved the king and wanted his honour to spread. Some loved him and also hoped for reward. Others were chiefly interested in reward; some served out of fear. After the first battle, the king gave them part of their reward. The campaign was not finished. His honour still had to spread.

What have we been doing with our own hands all week? The Midrash compares the four species to the person holding them: the lulav to the spine, the hadassim to the eyes, the aravos to the mouth, and the esrog to the heart. Rav Tzadok calls these species instruments of battle. We take hold of the parts of ourselves through which we act in the world.

Will I stand straight when it is difficult? What will my eyes pursue? What words will come from my mouth when I am hurt? What will my heart want? Those are the battles of malchus: bringing our ordinary choices under the rule of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. This is where the beautiful ideals we discussed in Are You "Only Human?" must become a lived reality.

David HaMelech understood this kind of struggle. Rav Tzadok calls him an ish milchamos, a man of wars. His outward battles reflected his continual inward struggle to overcome the yetzer. David's greatness was his faithfulness in that struggle.

There is a genuine victory available inside that struggle. You notice that you are about to speak sharply, and you hold back. You feel pulled toward something you know is wrong, and you choose differently. The fight is still there tomorrow, but you have brought another part of your life under the King's rule today. That is not merely preparation for malchus. It is one way malchus already becomes real.

Perhaps that is why we carry the four species every day rather than once at the beginning of Yom Tov. Yesterday's victory does not settle today's eyes, today's words, today's heart. We hold them again; we dedicate them again. The King's sovereignty is established in the very act of returning to the struggle.

But now Sukkos has ended. Our hands are empty. **Has the battle ended? What does the King want from us when we put the weapons down?**

The Rest David Could Not Build

Listen to the way David speaks of his son. He tells Shlomo that Hashem did not allow him to build the Beis HaMikdash because he had been a man of wars. Hashem promised a son who would be a man of rest; He would give him quiet from his enemies, and that son would build the House. David prepared for it with all his strength, but the completed house belonged to Shlomo.

It is possible to hear that as a simple change in historical circumstances. Rav Tzadok hears something inward too. David carried the work of fighting and overcoming, including the battle with his own yetzer. His heart, he says, was like the heart of a lion. Shlomo inherited a kingdom in which that battle had brought something to rest. Rav Tzadok calls Shlomo an ish menuchah: holiness and wisdom had already become bound to his heart.

That does not make David an unsuccessful king. Without David's battles, there would have been no kingdom of Shlomo and no place for the House to stand. Nor does Shlomo's quiet make David's struggles disappear. **The second kind of malchus grows from the first.** David makes room for the King. Shlomo lives in a house where the King's presence can be enjoyed.

Hashem appeared to Shlomo at Givon and offered him whatever he wished. Shlomo did not ask for wealth, long life or victory over his enemies. He asked for a lev shomea, a listening heart, so that he could serve Hashem's people well.

This happened in a dream. Shlomo was asleep. He was not making a public declaration or performing an impressive act. Yet this is what emerged from his heart when Hashem

met him. Rav Tzadok says that Shlomo's connection to Hashem remained even in sleep.

An account about the Chazon Ish offers a small picture of inward quiet. Rav Shmuel Vosner came to ask him a question and found him sitting with his eyes closed. He waited, thinking the Chazon Ish was asleep. When the Chazon Ish opened his eyes, he asked why Rav Vosner had not asked his question. Rav Vosner explained. The Chazon Ish answered that he had not been sleeping. That is the full exchange in the published account. We cannot know what he experienced, but Rav Vosner had encountered a person outwardly still and fully present.

One Blessing, Two Kings

There is a remarkable place where Chazal themselves put David and Shlomo together. In bentsching, who established the third brachah, Boneh Yerushalayim? The Gemara in Berachos 48b answers: **David and Shlomo**. David established the words about Israel and Jerusalem; Shlomo added the words about the great and holy House. We say it as one brachah.

Think what that means tonight, when we will bentch after our Yom Tov seudah. David brought Jerusalem into the life of the people and yearned for the place of the Shechinah. Shlomo built the Beis HaMikdash where that presence could dwell. The fight for a city and the joy of dwelling in the House are two parts of the same blessing. If there were only David, we would keep fighting toward a home. If there were only Shlomo, where would that home have come from?

And this sharpens our opening question. Rav Tzadok says the Rebbe of Peshischa identified Shlomo as the ushpiz of Shemini Atzeres. Rav Tzadok then places David and Shlomo as yesod and malchus within malchus. He is describing a deeper movement within the final middah, not adding an eighth middah after the seven. David's rule is built in the struggle; Shlomo's is revealed when that rule has become a settled relationship.

From the Sukkah to the King's Table

There is a striking teaching about the sukkah. After the days of judgment, we leave our permanent houses and enter a temporary dwelling, a small experience of exile. But whose shelter do we find there? Hashem's. We discover that even in a fragile dwelling, we can be at home with Him.

That is a comfort to take from the sukkah into Shemini Atzeres. The sukkah taught us to live under His protection. When we leave it, we need not leave that closeness behind. Perhaps d'veikus means that the relationship has found a place inside us, even when its walls and roof are gone.

We may know a small weekly taste of this at Shalosh Seudos. Friday night can demand a struggle simply to stop working and enter Shabbos. Shabbos day invites us to receive through tefillah, Torah and the seudah. Then, late in the day, a niggun may begin and we can sit for a moment without having to produce anything. We are still observing Shabbos and sharing its meal. In that moment, we can also enjoy simply being with Hashem.

Now we can answer the question with which we began. David is malchus that we must fight to establish. Shlomo is malchus we are finally able to inhabit. The King has always been the King; the change is in our ability to rest in His presence. Shemini Atzeres is not a new sefirah. It lets us experience the inward fruit of the seven.

Rav Tzadok says more. The words atzeres tihyeh lachem point to holiness that can enter even our eating, drinking and enjoyment. We can sit at the Yom Tov table, rejoice, and know before Whom we are sitting. This is not the end of service; it is one of its sweetest fruits.

The king in our earlier drash still needed his soldiers for the battles ahead. So does our King. There will be work after Yom Tov. But tonight the King offers something beyond a soldier's pay: **"Put down what you have been carrying. Come and sit with Me."**

The Little Ruler

I want to close with something Jay Litvin wrote about his own life. As a young man in Woodstock, he sat against a tree and looked out over the woods. The tree seemed so certain of its purpose. It held him up; its leaves shaded him; the ground beneath it sheltered living things. He spoke to Hashem and asked why the tree could know what it was here for while he was still searching. He got up that day without an answer.

Years passed. He grew closer to Torah, married and had children. When he was nearly fifty-eight and undergoing chemotherapy, that old question became urgent. What was his own indispensable place in this world?

One morning his eight-year-old son Dovie could not find the small ruler he needed for a geometry test. The boy was crying: he feared he would be unable even to take the test and would be embarrassed at school. Jay had an appointment and a train to catch. He searched with his son, but they could not find the ruler. He decided at least to drive Dovie to school. They hurried downstairs together, with Dovie still in tears.

They got into the car. Jay was about to back out when he stopped. He looked at Dovie and realized that he was going to miss the train. He would go to the store, buy a ruler, take his son into school and speak to the staff about his lateness. He told Dovie his plan. The boy smiled, tried to give his father a little wink and sat up straighter in the seat. Jay did what he had promised, spoke with the principal, and postponed his

appointment.

On the drive home, doubts came rushing in. Had he really missed an important appointment for a child's ruler? He sat in the parked car, wrestling with that thought. Then he began to smile. He saw what had happened: when Dovie needed someone, his father had been there. Jay turned to Hashem and asked Him to see how much his children needed him, how much he wanted to live and continue to be their father.

From then on he noticed moments he had once passed over: a goodbye kiss, a conversation about school, tucking in a child, singing at the Shabbos table. He made those moments into a prayer for healing. He had asked as a young man what he was here for. Now he understood himself as a tree his children could lean against.

He did have to do something for Dovie. But the deepest gift was that Dovie could count on his father being there. And perhaps that is why this story belongs at the end of Shemini Atzeres. We have carried the four minim, worked on ourselves and fought to bring every part of life before Hashem. Now, for one moment, let the striving grow quiet. We are in the King's company. **HaKadosh Baruch Hu, it is good simply to be here with You.**

Sources and attribution

Pri Tzadik, Devarim, Chag HaSukkos §§33, 38: David and Shlomo as yesod and malchus within malchus; the four species as instruments of battle; Shemini Atzeres and ordinary enjoyment. §35 discusses the levels of the Shabbos meals; the specific three-stage illustration above is the presenter's development.

Vayikra Rabbah 30:14: the four species and the body. I Kings 3:5-15: Shlomo's dream at Givon. I Chronicles 22:8-10: David's wars and Shlomo's rest. Berachos 48b: David and Shlomo each established a portion of the third blessing of bentching.

R. Eliyahu Kitov, "Sukkot and Passover," citing Yalkut Shimoni 653 for leaving home as voluntary exile. Jay Litvin, "How A Stupid Little Ruler Saved My Life," Chabad.org. The Chazon Ish account is told in Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, "Search for Serenity 011"; the earlier eyewitness source is not given there.

The return to the king and four soldiers recalls the earlier Sukkos drash, "What Does the King Want After the Victory?" The invitation to sit with the King is a homiletic conclusion, not a quotation from the Midrash.