



Weekly Insights into the Haftara
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler
Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

Palace & Family Intrigue

**MACHAR CHODESH - 25 p'sukim -
Shmuel Alef - 20:18-42**

The story related in this week's haftara, a special one read when Shabbat coincides with Erev Rosh Chodesh, is found in the 20th perek of Shmuel Alef. The story related in this chapter is well-known because of MACHAR CHODESH being read more often than a regular weekly haftara.

Specifically, there is one year-type without a Machar Chodesh haftara, ten with one, two with two, and one with three.

The episode, as detailed in this reading, tells of a difficult time of trial, a test for both David and his dear friend (and brother-in-law) Yonatan, the son of King Sha'ul.

Following King Sha'ul's failure to follow G-d's command when warring against their intractable enemy, Amalek, Hashem removed His favor from Sha'ul and placed it upon His choice of successor, Sha'ul's son-in-

law, David. As a result, Sha'ul struggled with bouts of depression and anger, even attempting to murder David. When David fled the palace after the King tried to spear him, he told Yonatan of Shaul's desire to kill him, something that Yonatan could not accept, as his father had sworn to him that he would not harm David. Our haftara tells the story of the two friends trying to reveal Sha'ul's true intentions. And, indeed, Sha'ul does just that, for when David's presence was missed at the festive Rosh Chodesh meal and on the following day, the King publicly accuses him of being a rebel who was trying to usurp the throne. The truth of Sha'ul's intentions was revealed.

Soon after, in a secret meeting in the field, Yonatan tearfully reveals to David what happened and urges him to escape before he is killed. Yonatan acts nobly, faithfully serving his father and continuing to show him the respect due to him, and, similarly, David never attempts to harm Sha'ul in order to save himself, despite numerous opportunities to do so.

Although the opening words of the haftara declaring "Machar Chodesh", that "tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh" form the obvious connection between the Shabbat and the haftara, there is more we see in the story that helps us understand its choice for the reading. King David is symbolized by the moon

(Tiferet Shlomo), explaining why we declare DAVID, MELECH YISRA'EL, CHAI V'KAYAM every month when we stand outdoors with a visible moon and recite Birkat HaL'vana. For, as the moon grows and is diminished, so too David had times of ascendancy and power as well as times of trouble and powerlessness. Most meaningful is that, like the moon, David humbly "diminished" his "light", always pointing to G-d as his source of strength and victory and not taking the glory for himself. It was this trait of King David that endeared this military hero/psalmist to Hashem.

And why we await for his descendant to usher in the Messianic Era. ✨