

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל פְּרֻשֵׁת יוֹחֵי תִשְׁפִּי הַ

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יְהוּדָה אֶתְּהָ יוֹדוּךָ אֶחָיִךְ יָדְךָ בְּעַרְףְּ אֵיבֶיךָ יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְךָ בְּנֵי אָבִיךָ. (פרק מט' ח)

Yehuda-you, your brothers shall acknowledge; your hand will be at your enemies' nape; your father's sons will prostrate themselves to you.

Thus begins Yaakov's blessings to Yehuda. A treatise could be written on just this pasuk as so many of our Mefarshim offer explanations regarding the interrelationships between these three separate phrases i.e., *יְהוּדָה אֶתְּהָ יוֹדוּךָ אֶחָיִךְ*, *יָדְךָ בְּעַרְףְּ אֵיבֶיךָ* and *יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְךָ בְּנֵי אָבִיךָ*. Rashi, because of the superfluous *אֶתְּהָ*, feels that the entire first phrase is a standalone, introductory statement by Yaakov. As so beautifully paraphrased by the Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash editors: "When Yehuda heard Yaakov's rebuke of his three older brothers, he drew back, afraid that (his father) may chastise him over the affair of Tamar. Yaakov calls him soothingly, 'Yehuda-you are not like them. *You*, your brothers shall acknowledge!'"

Rav Meir Simcha appears to agree that *יְהוּדָה אֶתְּהָ יוֹדוּךָ אֶחָיִךְ* is a prologue to the rest of Yehuda's received *brachos*. He offers us his understanding of the connection between the last two parts of our pasuk as follows: In Tosefta Brachos we read, "It happened that four elders were sitting in R' Yehoshua's gatehouse... R' Akiva asked them, 'Why did the *shevet* of Yehudah merit the kingship of Israel?' They answered, 'Because he admitted that he had relations with Tamar...' R' Akiva said to them, 'Do they give reward for a transgression? But what is the *real* reason of Yehudah's deserving the kingship?' They said back to him, 'Because he saved his brother (Yosef) from death...' He replied, 'It is enough that the act of saving him should serve as a forgiveness for selling him to the Ishmaelites. But rather what is the *real* reason he merited it?' They offered another answer: 'Because of Yehudah's humility, as we read in *Vayigash*, *וְיָשָׁב נָא עַבְדְּךָ תַּחַת הַנֶּעַר*, *now, therefore please, let your servant (me, Yehudah) remain instead of the youth (Binyamin)...*, i.e. Yehuda referred to himself as a slave.' R' Akiva said to them, 'Was (Yehuda) not a cosigner for his brother? And is not it the responsibility of a cosigner to fulfill his pledge? So what is the reason?' Exasperated, they said to him, 'Teach us our master.' He said to them, '...because they sanctified Hashem's Name at the Sea of Reeds. When all the other *shevatim* came and stood by the sea, this one said, 'I will go down into the water' and this one said, 'I will go down,' the *shevet* of Yehudah jumped and went in first and so sanctified Hashem's Name... And Tehillim also testifies to this, as it writes, *בְּצִיָּאתוֹ לְקַדְשׁוֹ הָיְתָה יְהוּדָה לְקַדְשׁוֹ* / *When Yisrael went out of Mitzraim... Yehuda became His sanctuary*-Rashi explains that Hashem singled out his tribe to be the *family of royalty* because they sanctified His name at the Sea of Reeds..." Of note, it seems that R' Akiva understood

the rest of the pasuk i.e., *וְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִמְּשֻׁלֹתָיו*, as, “the result of *shevet* Yehuda’s *הַשָּׁמַיִם* was that Yisrael became Yehuda’s (and not just Hashem’s) subjects.”

Rav Meir Simcha proposes *his* real reason for Yehuda’s ascension to the throne as follows: In *שמואל א טו* we read that Shmuel has informed Shaul that he will be the king of Israel. His first “task” is to go to battle and eradicate Amalek. Shmuel is extremely specific; this Divine commandment meant that he is to *have no pity on* (Amalek)-*kill man and woman alike... ox and sheep alike, camel and donkey alike*. The pasuk tells us that *וַיִּשְׁמַע שְׂאֹוֹל אֶת הָעָם... אֶת אִישׁ* *וְהַיְהוּדָה*/Shaul had **all the people** summoned...as well **as the men of Yehuda**. The outcome was a disaster. Although Yisrael “won” the war, *וְעַל כָּל הַטּוֹב וְלֹא אָבֹו*... *וְהָעָם עַל אַגָּג... וְהַיְהוּדָה*/Shaul, **as well as the people**, took pity on Agag... and on all that was good; they were not willing to destroy them. Shaul’s not fulfilling His command resulted in Hashem removing his crown. With Rav Meir Simcha’s amazing focus on the words of these pasukim, he shows us that interestingly, when Shaul reaches out to form his army, he counts *הָעָם* separately and *וְהַיְהוּדָה* separately-clearly two distinct groups. The “mess-up” i.e., not eliminating all of Amalek because *וְהָעָם*, having misplaced pity, was done by *וְהָעָם*, with no mention of the *וְהַיְהוּדָה*! This separate division of the army then, according to Rav Meir Simcha, did not transgress Hashem’s command. They did their part to eradicate Amalek. This is what Yaakov predicted when, in our pasuk, he tells Yehuda, *וְיָדָךְ בְּעַרְףְּ אֹיְבֶיךָ* i.e., in the future, “You will fight alongside Shaul against *אֹיְבֶיךָ*, Amalek, but will not violate Hashem’s words!” And the reward for that will be *וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֹו לְךָ בְּנֵי אֹיְבֶיךָ*-your progeny will assume the eternal kingship over Yisrael. Our author punctuates his “real” reason with an emphatic *וְנִכְבֵּן*! And that it because it is now very *מִתְּאָוִים* the interconnection of two of the three mitzvos that were incumbent on the nascent nation after conquering Eretz Yisrael, as told to us in *סנהדרין ב*: “Three mitzvos were commanded to the Jewish people upon their entrance into *Eretz Yisrael... to establish a king for themselves, to cut off the seed of Amalek and to build the הַבְּיָרָה* i.e., the Beis HaMikdash.” Yaakov, in our pasuk, is foretelling us that the throne will be given *only* to the one who is able to eradicate Amalek!

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ר' ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדר ע"ה
לזכר נשמת חמי מורי ר' יעקב נתן בן ר' ישראל שלמה ז"ל
ולזכר נשמת הרב יהודה בן ר' אברהם שמחה (קופרמן) זצ"ל
מחבר הגהות על ספר משך חכמה

טבת marks the fourth *yahrzeit* of *ע"ה* אביגדר ר' אלחנן. Her Holocaust nightmare began when she was only a young child and against all odds, with resiliency, perseverance and trust in Hashem, miraculously survived. She fought and conquered Amalek-how so? By together with my father ז"ל, creating three generations and b"ah more than fifty great-grandchildren who are Shomrei Torah u' mitzvos. She, together with the other Torah-committed *הַפְּלֵטָה*, are no doubt our eternal royalty and certainly share a spot very close to Hashem’s throne!

May she continue to be a *מְלִיצָה* for her entire family as well as all *יִשְׂרָאֵל*.