

June 2017 – Live English Broadcast  
Netzach Yisrael Yeshivah, Yerushalayim

## **The Crown and Mind of the Jewish Kingdom**

Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

### 1. RETURN OF THE KING

Welcome everyone. This afternoon we are going to devote our monthly broadcast to King David, the central figure of the holiday of *Shavu'ot*, which we celebrated a few days ago. We are taught that there are three figures associated with this holiday. The first is Moshe Rabbeinu who gave us the Torah. The second is King David, who was both born and passed away on *Shavu'ot*. He lived for seventy years from day to day. The third figure is the Ba'al Shem Tov, who passed away also on *Shavu'ot* (he was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul), at the age of 62. The Ba'al Shem Tov represents the entire Chassidic movement, indeed a Messianic movement working to bring the entire Jewish people to the consciousness that God is here with us, bestowing good upon us and inspiring us to bestow good to others. Connecting to God in our hearts is already the bringing of the Mashiach. "David, king of Israel, lives forever," as we say in the liturgy. In the Zohar, the same thing is said about Moshe Rabbeinu, that he lives forever. These three figures are eternal, bringing redemption to the whole world.

The one we will talk about now is King David. For the past several months we have devoted our live broadcasts to the special souls of the Bible. King David is the archetypal soul of kingdom (*malchut*). His character reflects the way that God wants the leader of a rectified kingdom to be.

We know that when a kingdom does not have a truly God-fearing king, it can go very wrong. The Arizal speaks of how the seven Primordial Kings of the world of chaos led to a shattering of reality. Unlike what many people think, a kingdom does not necessarily have to be democratic. We continue to believe in monarchy as a form of government because we believe that we will have another righteous king like King David, a figure who is entirely different from the kings we know from history.

### 2. CROWN OF KINGDOM

#### *David and Solomon*

So, let us see the different aspects of King David's character and how they correspond to the supernal channels of creation, the *sefirot*, and to the

corresponding powers of the soul. Let us first mention that the Ba'al Shem Tov was closely related to King David because it is explained that his soul was a reincarnation of King David's psyche (*nefesh*). As we go through the attributes of King David we will see in some cases how it relates to the Ba'al Shem Tov.

The lineage of the House of David represents the unfolding of the *sefirah* of kingdom, i.e., seeing it as a complete model that contains (through inter-inclusion) aspects of all the other *sefirot*.

David's first descendant to become a king was Solomon. It is not difficult to identify Solomon with the wisdom of kingdom, as obviously that is what he is best known for. Throughout his entire life, David yearned to build God a dwelling place, the holy Temple. Because he was a warrior and his hands were full of blood, God told him that he could not build the Temple himself, that it would be built by his son Solomon, but that nonetheless it would be named after him. [Indeed, when the kingdom split in the time of David's grandson, Rechavam, the Northern kingdom seceded with the words, "Now, go see [to] your house, David"<sup>1</sup> (עֲתָה רְאֵה בְיָתְךָ דָּוִד) referring to the Temple, which the phrase tells us was named after David.]

Solomon thus represents the fulfillment of David's deepest desire. David is the crown of kingdom and in kingdom itself, Solomon his son is the wisdom of kingdom. We find a similar connection between the crown and wisdom of kingdom in respect to the first two days of the year. The first two days of the year are known (together) as *Rosh Hashanah*. There are different reasons for why the New Year is two days long, but in the language of the sages, the first two days of the year are described as "a long day" (יומא אריכתא). The *Arizal* explains that the first ten days of the year (known as the "Ten days of repentance") represent the inter-inclusion of all ten *sefirot* in kingdom because it is during the first ten days that we are entrusted with building the kingdom of Heaven here below in such a manner that it reflect the *sefirah* of kingdom as it is above. As such, the first two days represent the construction of the crown and wisdom of kingdom.

### ***Three heads of the crown***

How does this translate into the entire Jewish people? Kingdom is the collective soul of the Jewish people, like the collective consciousness of all the Jews together. What does it mean then that David is the crown of this consciousness? The crown contains three heads, or parts, whose names in Chassidut are faith, pleasure, and will.

---

<sup>1</sup>. 1 Kings 12:16.

### *Believing in every Jew*

As we said, in modern society, thinking about a king is different from thinking about a President or a Prime Minister, which are replaced from time to time. But, a king requires us to believe that there indeed exists a righteous soul in the Jewish people who can be the Commander in Chief, someone that we can, both as individuals and as a people, follow completely, never to replace him as long as he lives. It requires us to believe that at any given moment there is such a soul in the world.

The Ba'al Shem Tov explained this in the following way. Just as every Jew has to believe in God, so every Jew has to believe in every other Jew. To believe in another Jew means believing that there is an infinite potential in every Jew — an infinite potential for good. Sometimes you see even the opposite: it seems to you that a particular Jew has (and demonstrates) negative qualities. And yet, to believe in a Jew means to believe that beyond what you see, there is in him an infinite potential for good. This infinite goodness is what we call the Divine soul, a part of God above. The same holds true for the spark of holy kingdom innate in every Jewish soul. In the Talmud we are taught that all Jews are kings. In every generation there is one soul whose kingly potential is the greatest. He is the potential Mashiach. Just as we are instructed to believe in the Divine potential of every individual soul so are we instructed to believe in the collective soul of Israel, the *sefirah* of kingdom, that at any given moment a potential king, Mashiach, exists within the collective soul, an individual with the potential to become the Mashiach. The Rambam includes the belief in the fact that every moment the Mashiach can reveal his potential as one of the Thirteen Principles of Faith. This special soul is the soul of King David and it is present at this moment and able to assume its role as the King of Israel. So, this is the head of faith within the crown of the *sefirah* of kingdom.

### *The possible Utopia*

Once we are able to exercise our head of faith through our belief in the potential Mashiach, we descend to the head of pleasure. In the collective sense, as part of the model we are painting of the *sefirah* of kingdom, the head of pleasure appears as a feeling that a utopian reality is possible in the world. This is a feeling of infinite pleasure. Nothing can be better than that.

### *Wanting the future*

The next level is the head of will and its collective manifestation in kingdom appears as the determination to do all we can to bring about the revelation of the Mashiach and the utopian reality. Every one of us would like to contribute all that he or she can to realizing the best possible reality in our world. Indeed, the Lubavitcher Rebbe tried to awaken the collective head of will in each individual by encouraging us to, "Do all that is in your power to reveal

the Mashiach.” If I really want something to happen, I can make it happen, even if it requires self-sacrifice. These are the three heads of the crown. Will is about taking responsibility for the future and how it will unfold. All three levels or heads of the crown derive from the presence of King David’s soul in the world.

### 3. DAVID’S FEMININE ESSENCE

Last month, when we spoke about Isaac, we explained an important teaching from the Arizal, that initially Isaac was a feminine soul in a masculine body. But then, when Isaac was bound by Abraham at Mt. Moriah, he received a masculine soul as well. Thus, we have already seen an example of a feminine soul within a male figure.

King David is an even more powerful example of this, since the very essence of his soul is feminine, the soul of kingdom. However, unlike Isaac, David’s spiritual femininity does not need to undergo change, nor does it need to be augmented by a masculine aspect. He is exactly how he needs to be: on the one hand, he is a very masculine man, perhaps the greatest warrior of all, yet at the same time, his essence remains feminine.

The feminine nature of King David’s soul was recognized by the sages. One example of this appears in regard to King Yeravam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom. Recall that at the end of Solomon’s reign there was a rebellion led by Yeravam.<sup>2</sup> Yeravam was a very high soul who eventually deteriorated into a wicked man. But, because of his great soul, the sages say<sup>3</sup> that at a certain point God took him and said to him, “Let Me, you and King David all walk together in the Garden of Eden.” God invited Yeravam to join him together with David. The sages say that Yeravam asked the Almighty, “Who will lead the way? Who will be first?” God answered, “David will walk first.” When Yeravam heard that, he declined the invitation. That was the beginning of his fall.

What is this story trying to tell us? To understand the subtext in this story (as explained by the Arizal<sup>4</sup>), we need to remember that Yeravam was a descendant of Ephraim, Joseph’s son. From a Kabbalistic standpoint, Joseph is considered the primary masculine power in the Jewish people since he is the archetypal soul of the *sefirah* of foundation associated primarily with the male procreative member. King David on the other hand, as we have been discussing, is associated with the *sefirah* of kingdom, the essentially feminine Divine faculty. So, the subtext of Yeravam’s question is, who goes first, men or women? Yeravam was implying that clearly it is the masculine that runs

---

<sup>2</sup>. 1 Kings 11:28-40.

<sup>3</sup>. *Sanhedrin* 102a.

<sup>4</sup>. *Likutei hashas, Ibid.*

the world, therefore it follows that I, Yerovam, have to lead the way. But, the amazing thing about this story is that the Almighty did not agree with him and replied that no, it would be David who leads the way. Surprisingly, this story might be the very origin of the well-known phrase, "Ladies first!" To speak jokingly, when Yerovam heard that his wife would go first, he could not fathom that reality.

How does this contribute to our understanding of King David being the crown of kingdom? King Solomon wrote, "A woman of valor is her husband's crown." Thus, King David is—relative to the entire masculine-dominated reality symbolized by Yerovam—like a woman of valor. He reflects how the feminine figure (kingdom) is the crown of even the masculine-run reality. This entire topic is one that requires deep contemplation and careful consideration. It is easy to jump to all kinds of mistaken conclusions here, yet nonetheless, because it is such an important topic, we cannot refrain from delving into it. Notice an important difference between David's relatively feminine nature and Isaac's. The *Zohar* explains that because Isaac had a feminine soul, it was difficult for him to marry (which is why he married his wife Rebecca only after his binding on Mt. Moriah, when he received a masculine soul). Yet, King David had many wives, he had no trouble marrying.

One of the most intriguing stories related to this same issue of King David's feminine essence is his relationship with his friend Yonatan, King's Saul firstborn son. After King Saul realized that it would be David who would be the next king (and not his son), he began to envy David and began to hate him. But, with regard to Yonatan himself, his love for David was unconditional love at first sight. The sages say that the love of David and Yonathan is indeed the perfect form of love between two souls. The Arizal explains that in every love story, whether physically expressed or spiritually expressed (in the case of love between two men, as here in regard to the love of David and Yonatan) there has to be a relatively masculine and relatively feminine soul. David in this case was the feminine soul, and Yonatan was the masculine soul. Eventually though, David even though he was feminine, ascended higher than Yonatan, as related in the verse, "...they wept together until David was [cried] the greater."<sup>5</sup> (עד דוד הגדול). The same is true of the woman of valor who becomes her husband's crown.

#### 4. WISDOM OF KINGDOM

Even though we said that Solomon represents the wisdom in kingdom, we find that David himself was very wise. In his introduction to his great corpus of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, the *Rambam* lists the great sages of every

---

<sup>5</sup>. 1 Samuel 20:41.

generation through whom the Torah was transmitted. Solomon, the wisest of men, does not appear in this list. We would think that he definitely belongs in this list, but the *Rambam* leaves him out. However, King David does appear in this list. This illustrates the special link that David has with the Torah and why he was born and passed away on the holiday of *Shavu'ot*, which commemorates the Giving of the Torah. The Torah is described as coming out of wisdom. So if a soul like David's is described as the receiver and the transmitter of the Torah from his generation to the next, then he is very strongly linked with wisdom.

There is another strong connection between David and wisdom. David is the seventh in the *Rambam's* list. Moshe was not the first in the list, the first is God who gave the Torah to Moshe. Moshe then is the second, the first to receive the Torah from God. The next transmitters of the Torah are Joshua, Pinchas, Eli the High Priest, Samuel the Prophet, and David is the seventh. David was anointed king by Samuel. Not only did the anointing give David the inspiration to manifest his deep potential for being a king, but it also revealed in him his essential affinity to the Torah, his attribute of wisdom. In anointing David, Samuel transmitted the Torah to David.

Interestingly, continuing to follow the *Rambam's* list we find that the next transmitter of the Torah after David was Achiyah the Shilonite, the prophet who was Elijah's mentor. The sages say that Achiyah lived a very long life and was actually present at the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, but ultimately, he became part of the line of transmission only after David. Many years later, Achiyah's soul was the spiritual mentor of both Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and the Ba'al Shem Tov. So, in a sense, it was David who passed the Torah to Achiyah who then transmitted it and taught its inner dimension to both Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and to the Ba'al Shem Tov.

We learn that just as Samuel anointed David, an evil spirit came over Saul, the previous king (who had also been anointed by Samuel). Saul's attendants told him that the only way to alleviate his suffering would be for someone who would play music for him. This person, they said, should be "one who knows how to play"<sup>6</sup> (אִישׁ יָדַע לְהַנְנוֹן)—to play the music needed to sweeten anxiety and pain. Saul agreed and reiterated that the individual they select be, "one who plays well" (אִישׁ מֵיטִיב לְהַנְנוֹן). One of the attendants then spoke up and said that he had seen such a man in the household of Yishai (Jesse) of Beit Lechem. He praised him with six different traits (no other figure in the Bible is praised as much), "he is skilled in music" implying that he can sweeten Saul's evil spirit, "he is a stalwart fellow," "a warrior," implying that he knows strategy, "of an

---

<sup>6</sup> 1 Samuel 16:16.

understanding countenance,” implying that he is a practical person, “handsome in appearance,” and, “God is with him.”

The final trait with which the attendant praised David is the most difficult to understand. The simplest explanation that like Joseph, whatever he does, God makes him successful. He has good fortune and success. But the sages add that for God to be with someone means that he can study a topic in Torah and then know how to legally rule on the topic in a given practical situation. There are many great scholars of Torah, but that fact that one is knowledgeable about an issue in the Torah, does not necessarily imply that he knows how to provide a legal ruling in that topic. To be able to make a halachic ruling requires a different type of savvy. It always involves being able to choose between two or more different opinions, a talent that actually requires *Ru'ach Hakodesh* (Divinely inspired spirit), a special faculty that is very rare. This special skill is described as God being with the person.

As Saul was listening to these praises sung about one individual, in his mind he began to think that they could also be said about his son, Yonatan. Until the attendant reached the final trait, “that God was with him.” At that moment, he realized that whomever this was, he was greater than his son. To have that faculty you have to be either a descendant of Yissachar (the tribe from whom the core of the Sanhedrin came), a Levite, or you were a potential king. So Saul realized from this that David was not just a musician, but an actual threat—a potential king (since he wasn’t from the tribe of Yissachar or from Levi) that might take Yonatan’s place.

From all this we see that David’s ability to make legal rulings correctly is an aspect of the faculty of wisdom that even his son Solomon, the wisest of all men, did not possess.

In any case, these two points illustrate David’s special affinity to wisdom.

## 5. UNDERSTANDING OF KINGDOM

Actually in the list we just saw, one of the special traits possessed by King David was, “understanding in practical matters.” Understanding is the mother principle and the characteristic of King David that best illustrates his understanding is his poetic ability. He is known as the “pleasant poet of Israel.” All of the songs sung by the Levites in the Temple were written or arranged by King David. The Mother principle too is described as being pleasant (נעים).

In Psalms 27, David says, “I have asked but one thing from God: to dwell in the House of God and to envision God’s pleasantness.” Another important

verse that expresses this same concept is, "May the pleasantness of *Adni* our God be upon us."<sup>7</sup> This pleasantness is the Mother Principle in Kabbalah.

Wisdom and understanding are two companions that never separate. In David's character, they appear as the ability to make a legal ruling on Torah issues and to sing pleasantly.

## 6. ADAM, DAVID, AND MASHIACH

The Arizal notes that there are three important individuals alluded to in the acronym created from Adam's name. The first letter, alef, stands for Adam himself (אדא). The second letter, dalet, is the initial of David (דוד). The third letter, mem, is the initial letter of Mashiach (משיח). What this means says the Arizal, is that David is an intermediate between the beginning and end of history. The beginning is Adam and the end is the Mashiach. The fact that he is an intermediate identifies him with understanding, whose Hebrew name, *binah*, literally means to be "in between." The Ibn Ezra explains from this etymology that *binah* is "the middle brain." We can continue to understand from this that the consciousness of understanding is the consciousness of being in the middle; in this case being in the middle of history. History as we see in the Book of Chronicles is all about kings, sovereign after sovereign.

### *The beginning of Mashiach's reign*

Let us take this idea from the Arizal and expand it using some very simple mathematical considerations. Adam was born in the first year of creation, for our purposes we will call it the zeroth year. David was born in the year 2854, a number that is quite easy to calculate from the Bible. So, if David is the midpoint between Adam and the Messiah we can easily calculate when that the year of the Mashiach is 5708 or 1948 in the civil calendar. 1948 is a year that most Jews (and even non-Jews) are quite familiar with.

However, according to this calculation, 1948 is the year in which the Mashiach was born. How old was king David when he became the ruler over the entire Jewish people? In practice, David did not rule over the entire people straightaway. Rather, just as there are two archetypal feminine figures in Kabbalah, Rachel and Leah, David too had to rectify each individually through his sovereignty. Thus, we find that at first, when he turned thirty years old, he ruled seven years in Hebron alone; Hebron is identified with Rachel. It was only when he was thirty-seven that he came to Jerusalem (identified with Leah) and then he ruled over the entire Jewish people, over all Twelve Tribes. Both these dates are very important.

---

<sup>7</sup> Psalms 90:17.

### *Mashiach in Jerusalem*

So, continuing our calculation, David became the king of (all of) Israel, in the year 2854 plus 37, which equals 2891, and that is the midpoint of the time when the Mashiach will become the king of all of Israel. A quick calculation will reveal that this will be in the year 5781 (since 2891 is the midpoint of 5781, or if we just double 2891, in the year 5782). Another point of clarification regarding David is that only when he came to rule in Jerusalem did he ascend to the level of the world of Emanation.

## 7. KNOWLEDGE OF KINGDOM

Knowledge is the third intellectual faculty. King David is related to Betzalel the Tabernacle's artisan through his father Hur. Hur's parents were Miriam, Moshe Rabbeinu's sister, and Caleb ben Yefune, from whom the House of David descends. The Torah states that Betzalel was filled with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.<sup>8</sup> *Rashi* there explains that understanding refers to logic, or being able to infer one thing from another (usually using induction). *Rashi* also explains there that knowledge refers to *Ru'ach Hakodesh*, the holy spirit that allows a person to say what the verdict is instantaneously, as we saw earlier. The Arizal says that David is the "Master of all who possess the Holy Spirit" (רבו של כל בעלי רוח הקודש).

What is the difference between prophecy and the holy spirit. Prophecy originates above and descends below; it is hearing the word of God speaking to you and then being able to convey it to others. But, *Ru'ach Hakodesh* comes from your own soul, it is insight, like reflected light from your own being. The Mashiach who ends history, his inspiration is a type of composite between the two: it is direct light (Moshe's soul of prophecy) illuminating the body of reflected light (David's body of *Ru'ach Hakodesh*). Reflected light, it says, returns to a higher place than even the source of the direct light from God.

The Ba'al Shem Tov says that there are infinite levels of *Ru'ach Hakodesh*, but the lowest level is when a person can trust the first thing that comes to mind, to be able to trust the inspiration and insight from within. When studying Torah, one should not think that the first thought that comes to mind is true. On the contrary, one should criticize one's initial insight. You should analyze and criticize it. But, *Ru'ach Hakodesh* is when you can trust that first insight. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to claim that we lack this insight, it is simply not refined enough through refraining from sins and polished enough through our Torah study. So, even though we cannot necessarily trust it, our deepest insight does exist within us and since, as we saw, King David is the master of all who possess *Ru'ach Hakodesh*, we can say that he represents the deepest consciousness, or deepest aspect of the *sefirah* of knowledge in us all.

---

8.

Knowledge is the manifestation of the super-consciousness (crown) in our consciousness.

## 8. FROM LOVING-KINDNESS TO KINGDOM OF KINGDOM

This year (5777), we published a series of videos describing the seven lower faculties of each of the Seven Shepherds (Abraham through King David). Since we covered David's seven lower faculties in that series, we have devoted most of this lecture to David's intellectual faculties and to his crown. Still let us quickly review the main points offered in the aforementioned series:

### *Loving-kindness*

When pronounced differently, David's name means "a lover" (טִיֵּט), a word that appears many times in the Song of Songs (written by David's son Solomon). King David had eighteen wives, six of whom are mentioned explicitly in the Bible. The first was Michal, King Saul's daughter. The last was Batsheva, Solomon's mother. The most important in the middle is Avigail, one of the seven prophetesses identified by the sages.<sup>9</sup>

With the same pronunciation, the word "lover" also means "uncle." According to the Torah, the greatest love and compatibility in marriage is found when a man marries his niece (specifically, his sister's daughter). This is the closest form of familial marriage allowed by the Torah (a woman, for instance, may not marry her nephew; this type of marriage is forbidden). When you look in the Bible, you do not find a single instance of David being described as loving someone. But, we do find that five different people love him. There are those who try to point out the things that seem wrong to them about the Bible and about its stories. King David seems to be singled out as a very negative figure by some so called 'scholars.' Nonetheless, in spite of all the things that seem negative about him, he is the most charismatic figure in the Bible. Everyone seems to fall in love with him.

If people fall in love with you, you must be a feminine figure. The first who is explicitly stated to have fallen in love with David is King Saul who "loved David greatly" before he saw him to be a rival to his monarchy. The next person to love David was Yonatan, and their souls became bound as one. Then Michal (Saul's daughter) fell in love with David. She eventually became his first wife. Then the entire Jewish people (Judah and Israel) love David. Finally, Chira the king of Tyre also loves David. Chira later helped Solomon construct the Temple. Tyre is considered an archetype of the entire non-Jewish world. So first the royal family loved David, then the entire Jewish people, and finally the entire non-Jewish world. Now, even though the Bible

---

<sup>9</sup>. Megilah ???

does not mention even once that David loved anyone, it must be that it was his own love that inspired and attracted others to love him, since love reflects love. As described by King Solomon, "Like the waters reflect the face, so the heart of one man to another."

### ***Might***

This faculty was best illustrated when he killed Goliath, something we talked about in some length last year in one of our first classes.

### ***Beauty***

Here we encounter David's compassion, which can be seen in David's ability to be a shepherd, first of his father's flock and then of the entire Jewish people.

### ***Victory***

Certainly this is how he was victorious over all his enemies. Victory, *netzach*, also means eternity, which we say is "King David lives forever." In terms of the psyche's faculties, we associate the *sefirah* of victory with active confidence. Likewise, we find no figure more than King David with an active confidence. It is he who sings the song of the cat, "I shall pursue my enemies and destroy them, I will not return until they are annihilated."<sup>10</sup>

### ***Acknowledgment***

Another translation for this *sefirah's* name is splendor. With regard to King David, this especially has to do with how the crown of the House of David fit his head.

### ***Foundation***

When King David married Batsheva it was with a blemish in his *sefirah* of foundation, which corresponds to the procreative organ. He spent the rest of his life doing *teshuvah* for his seeming transgression and this is his foundation.

### ***Kingdom***

Together with being the greatest king, David manifested kingdom's inner experience of lowliness. He also pours out his soul in prayer, which is also a property of kingdom. His name has two letters *dalet* in it. The letter *dalet* literally means "poverty," and David felt his entire life that he had nothing of his own. Everything was given to him by the Almighty.

## **9. THE CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING DAVID**

Let us end with the question of why is King David considered so problematic? The *Arizal* devotes a lengthy and deep teaching to this. He explains that his soul is the greatest part of the soul of Adam that fell into the depths of impurity after the Primordial sin. His soul was imprisoned there for

---

<sup>10</sup>. Psalms 18:38.

2854 years because of Adam's sin. It was redeemed from that place for the first time with David's birth.

Because he was so stained with the impurity he came from, that was the reason that he had so many problems and so much controversy surrounds him. But, because God sees into the heart, He forgave him for his sins, seeing that he was coming with so much negativity from where he came. It is important to know that there are great souls in the world who are plagued by their origin.

With every reappearance that David's soul makes in the world, he becomes more purified. When he returned as the Ba'al Shem Tov he was already purified, but one point remained from David's initial psyche: He was still afraid of falling into the mouth of the deepest abyss. The Ba'al Shem Tov explained that even though he could hear Torah from God Himself, he was still afraid every moment of his life of having an arrogant thought and therefore being cast into the mouth of the deepest abyss. A person who feels himself constantly on the verge of falling is the one who embodies King David's soul and is destined to get up and redeem the world.