

Parsha Ponders

Machar Chodesh | April 29, 2022 | 28 Nissan 5782

The Royal roast and family feasts¹

ויהי ממחרת החדש השני ויפקד מקום דוד ויאמר שאול אל-יהונתן בנו מדוע לא-בא בן-ישי גס-תמול גם-היום אל-הלחם: ויען יהונתן את-שאול נשאל נשאל דוד מעמדי עד-בית לחם: ויאמר שלחני נא כי זבח משפחה לנו בעיר והוא צוה-לי אחי ועתה אם-מצאתי חן בעיניך אמלטה נא ואראה את-אחי על-כן לא-בא אל-שלחן המלך: ויחר-אף שאול ביהונתן ויאמר לו בן-נעות המרדות הלוא ידעתי כי-בחר אתה לבן-ישי לבשתך ולבשת ערות אמך: כי כל-הימים אשר בן-ישי חי על-האדמה לא תכון אתה ומלכותך ועתה שלח וקח אתו אלי כי בן-מות הוא

It was the day after the New Moon, the second day [of *Rosh Chodesh*], and David's seat was vacant. Shaul said to his son Yonasan: "Why didn't the son of Yishai come, neither yesterday nor today to the meal?" Yonasan answered Shaul: "David exceedingly implored me for permission² to go to Bethlehem. He said please let me go, as my family's feast is in the city, and my brother commanded me to be there. Now, if I've found favor in your eyes, I'll slip away and see my family. Therefore, he didn't come to the King's banquet". Shaul became enraged at Yonasan and said to him: "[You are] the son of a rebellious and immoral³ woman! Behold, I know you have sided with the son of Yishai, to your shame and the shame of your mother's nakedness⁴! For all of the days that the son of Yishai is on this Earth, your kingdom will never be established. Now, go and send for him to be brought to me, as he is a dead man"⁵

As Shabbos this week coincides with *Erev Rosh Chodesh*, there is a special *Haftarah* that is read⁶. It describes the story of David before he became the sole King of Israel, and King Shaul's growing distrust of him. After Shaul made several attempts to end David's life⁷, David ran away and went into hiding. He met up with Shaul's son Yonasan, his most trusted friend. Yonasan couldn't believe his father would try to do such a thing, and they came up with a plan to confirm Shaul's intentions. The following two days would be *Rosh Chodesh*, and as usual the King would have a banquet. As one of the King's attendants, David was expected to attend. Yonasan was to tell the King that David had to be at his family's feast. If the King was understanding, then would be proof that he didn't seek David's life. If he became infuriated, it would show that David must remain in hiding⁸. The latter is what happened, and David had to remain on the run. This is the simple understanding of the verses, but that didn't stop the Chasam Sofer from providing an alternate, *derush* and halachically-oriented reading of the verses.

There's a law known as *ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos*, that we are forbidden to pass up a *mitzvah* that comes our way, even to fulfill a different *mitzvah*⁹. We could then ask on David's plan. How could he pass up a festive Rosh Chodesh meal at the King's banquet, and join in in his family's offering? He's passing up on the *mitzvah* of the King's banquet! Well, what *is* the *mitzvah* of joining the King's meal?

¹ Based on Chasam Sofer's *Toras Moshe I*, end of *parshas Bereishis s.v.* נשאל מעמדי

² *Metzudas Dovid ad. loc.*

³ *Rashi ad. loc.*

⁴ This strange phrase is to indicate that King Shaul was concerned people will be surprised that Yonasan loves the one that Shaul hates, implying that they weren't really father and son. They would conclude that Yonasan's mother must have committed adultery (*Radak ad. loc.*)

⁵ *I Samuel 20:27-33*

⁶ *Ibid v. 18-42*, as per *Megillah 31a*

⁷ See *ibid 19:10-24*

⁸ *Ibid 20:1-7*

⁹ *Megillah 6b*

Seemingly, the concept of *berov am hadras melech*, the King of all Kings is praised more in a crowd¹⁰. The whole reason to join the King's feast would be because there would be a lot of people there, creating a greater opportunity to praise Hashem in public. An important point is that the Magen Avraham rules¹¹ that the concept of *ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos* doesn't apply to *berov am hadras melech*. If a bona fide *mitzvah* could be accomplished by skipping this one, it's permissible. Therefore, David's decision was justified.

This ruling is based on the commentary of Rashi. The *Mishnah* says¹² that during the Yom Kippur service¹³, if a person was listening to the Kohen Gadol read from the Torah scroll, they couldn't see the bull and goat offerings being burned, as well as vice versa. The *Mishnah* stresses that this isn't because it is forbidden; just the two events are too far apart from each other to go from one to the other. The *gemarra* asks¹⁴: obviously it isn't forbidden to skip one event to view the other!? It answers that no, I would have thought it is forbidden. Why? Due to the concept of *ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos*. Maybe I can't skip the Kohen Gadol reading from the Torah scroll to see the bull and goat offerings, as that would be passing over one *mitzvah* for another. What *mitzvah* is there in listening to the Kohen Gadol, or watching the offerings burn? The *gemarra* answers *berov am hadras melech*. Comes the *Mishnah* and teaches us that there's no problem skipping one for the other.

Although, if we were to take a close look at what Rashi writes, we'll see that the Magen Avraham's statement is not so simple¹⁵. Rashi says¹⁶ that the reason why in this case you can skip one *mitzvah* for the other, is because we're discussing *seeing* an event. Since you never technically began to be *involved* with the *mitzvah*, you are allowed to skip it. What comes out from this is that if one *were* to be involved in a *mitzvah*, even one that is only a case of *berov am hadras melech*, it would be forbidden to skip it. If so, maybe we can't use this Magen Avraham to answer David's behavior? However, even Rashi's explanation will help us. David told Yonasan, he had already been invited to partake of his family's offering. That means he was already involved in that *mitzvah* before the *mitzvah* of joining King Shaul's banquet¹⁷. In addition, partaking of a sanctified offering is a much greater *mitzvah*, and one could pass up a smaller *mitzvah* for a greater one¹⁸.

This is what Yonasan meant when he told his father King Shaul that David asked of him to go to his family's offering. Meaning, David was asking Yonasan if it was permissible according to Jewish law. Can he skip out the *mitzvah* of joining King Shaul's feast, which is merely a *mitzvah* of *berov am hadras*

¹⁰ [Proverbs 14:28](#), [Pesachim 64b](#), [Yoma 70a](#). See [Chayei Adam 68:11](#) and [Beur Halacha 426:2 s.v. אלא](#)

¹¹ [Magen Avraham](#) to [Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 147:8 § 11](#), quoting [Yoma 70a](#) with [Rashi](#)

¹² [Yoma 7:2](#)

¹³ The one which happens to be described in this week's *parsha*, although the [Chasam Sofer](#) presumably didn't write this for *Acharei Mos*

¹⁴ [Yoma 70a](#)

¹⁵ "ובאמת המעיין ברש"י שם ביומא יראה שאינו כך"

¹⁶ *Ad. loc. s.v. קמ"ל*

¹⁷ Although, I assume King Shaul had this banquet every Rosh Chodesh, and it sounds like David was always expected to be there. How then can we say that David's family's invitation preceded the "invitation" to King Shaul's banquet?

¹⁸ This statement of the [Chasam Sofer](#) isn't so simple. See [Minchas Asher Klalei Mitzvos 1:4](#), who discusses if *ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos* applies when you are only able to fulfill one of the two *mitzvos* (this whole piece of the [Chasam Sofer](#) assumes it does apply, unlike the [Chayei Adam 68:1](#) cited there). Also, if you're able to fulfill both, there are those that say that you can't pass up the smaller *mitzvah* to fulfill the larger one first. See there

Melech? Yonasan told his father that once David said that he was already invited to his family's offering, Yonasan ruled that it was permissible.

However, when it comes to priority in *mitzvos*, we have a couple of other rules. Usually we say *tadir vesheino tadir, tadir kodem*, we do something that is more frequent before something that is less frequent¹⁹. And yet, it's clear from our sources that when something requires publicizing, it takes precedence before something more frequent, and even something of greater sanctity²⁰. Now, at this point in the story, King Shaul's kingship was starting to be questioned. People were starting to catch on that David ought to really be King. If so, King Shaul's authority needed to be publicized. That means then that his banquet takes precedence²¹, even before a greater *mitzvah*, such as partaking of David's family's offering. Due to this factor, King Shaul became enraged at Yonasan for his incorrect ruling. He shouldn't have told David that it was okay to skip out on the banquet. He thus concluded: "For all of the days that the son of Yishai is on this Earth, your kingdom will never be established."

Good Shabbos

¹⁹ Berachos 51b; Pesachim 114a

²⁰ The Chasam Sofer cites Sukkah 55b, but nothing seemed relevant there. I believe he meant 54b-55a, which discusses singing the Rosh Chodesh *shir* in the Temple before the Shabbos one (when the two events coincide), to publicize that the Jewish Court was confident that it was Rosh Chodesh. This was true, despite Shabbos being more frequent and more sanctified than Rosh Chodesh. I'm surprised the new editions of Toras Moshe didn't fix this seeming typo. The Chasam Sofer also cites Magen Avraham to Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 684:3 § 2, who also cites Sukkah 54b, corroborating my understanding

²¹ The Chasam Sofer repeats the phrase *berov am hadras melech*. I'm not sure if he's suggesting that the "*hadras melech*" in this context means King Shaul himself, or simply his "*mitzvah*" of partaking in the banquet. Also, I don't fully understand how attending King Shaul's banquet accomplishes publicizing his authority. I guess since David was the potential replacement for the throne, his attending the banquet would have given King Shaul more legitimacy