



Parshat Vayehi
1 Kings 2:1-12
January 3, 2015 / 12 Tevet 5775

The authors of our text were firmly committed to promoting the Davidic line; after all, the messiah is supposed to be one of his descendants, but the reality of David's life was far from noble. As a young man, he gathered a group unemployed ruffians and transformed them into an army. Upon becoming King he systematically eliminated Saul's family. He loved the ladies so much that in several instances he managed to get himself in sufficient trouble to cause national incidents. In one case, he was so overcome by lust that he had one of his trusted friends, Uriah, sent to the front line to be killed.

He never engaged in estate planning and as a result, his sons, contested with one another and in some instances sought to not only unseat him but have him killed. Bottom line, the text (our text) promoted a David, for reasons other than his character.

Most of us have a tendency to view a person who is on the verge of death kindly. This is their last chance to make amends. This is their last opportunity to right some of the wrongs they committed in the past. Within that context, David offers Solomon advice. Get rid of your potential enemies, try to behave in an honorable fashion; I wish I had.

It could be that David's introductory remarks embodied the real lesson of his life. As he lay dying, he might have looked back and remembered the young man who slew a giant. The young man who had sufficient faith that he most likely heard God's voice. The young man filled with faith. And he might have realized that as life became more complicated, as he rose from a simple shepherd to become a king, that his desire for power, women and perhaps wealth clouded and eventually overshadowed the man whom he once was, the man whom he hoped his son would become. Perhaps that's the lesson the haftarah was meant to teach. Remember who you were and what is important and don't be misled by the false gods of modernity.

This commentary was written by Rabbi Charles Simon, Executive Director of the FJMC and author of numerous books, including "Understanding the Haftarat. An Everyperson's Guide" and "The Non-Jewish Spouse: Strategies for Clergy and Lay Leadership". [Both of these books are available in the FJMC on-line store.]