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לעילוי נשמת שמעון בן ר' יקותיאל זלמן היים

The Zera Emes Project by Rabbi Moshe Hubner was created to honor and share the Torah of over 250 Gedolim who weren't zocheh to descendants of their own. Their legacy lives on through their words of Torah and emunah that continue to inspire and touch countless lives. By bringing their timeless divrei Torah and wisdom to life, we create a powerful connection to the past to help inspire today's generation.

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The Tefillah for the Monarchy

The Gemara (*Yoma* 53b) details the special short *tefillah* the kohein gadol recited after he left the Holy of Holies during the Yom Kippur service. Among the requests is: “לא יעדי עביד שולטן מדבית יהודה” – May the kingdom not pass from the house of Yehudah.”

These words are found in the Targum on Yaakov's *brachah* to Yehudah (*Bereishis* 49:10), “לא יסור שבט מיהודה” – The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah.” This scepter represented monarchy. Remarkably, this blessing did not end with the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. Even in exile, the *reish galusa*, the heads of the Babylonian exile, were always appointed from Shevet Yehudah. The leadership of Klal Yisrael is meant to come from Yehudah.

But, as the Ramban explains, this was not merely a blessing; it was a commandment. Yaakov instructed that the staff of authority must never be transferred from Yehudah to another *shevet*. The monarchy of Klal Yisrael must come only from Yehudah's descendants. Therefore, anyone who assumes royal authority from a different *shevet* violates Yaakov's command.

THE CHASHMONAIM

This forms the background to a well-known paradox regarding the Chashmonaim. The Chashmonaim are the heroes of Chanukah. They rescued Klal Yisrael, fought the Greeks, and saved us from religious persecution—our spiritual annihilation. Yet, in what seems to be a cruel twist of fate, their entire family line was wiped out within a few generations. Why were they punished so harshly?

The Rambam notes that they were Kohanim—members of Shevet Levi—and nevertheless “appointed a king from among themselves and restored monarchy to Klal Yisrael for more than two hundred years.” (*Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah*, beginning of Chapter 3.)

The Ramban writes that because the Chashmonaim assumed the monarchy despite not being from Shevet Yehudah, “they suffered a great punishment; the four righteous sons of the elder Chashmonai who ruled one after another all fell by the sword despite their power and success. In the end, their final punishment was what the Gemara (*Baba Basra* 3b) states: ‘Anyone who says he is from the house of the Chashmonaim is actually a slave,’ for they were all killed as a result of this iniquity.”

In other words, לא יסור שבט מיהודה is not only a *tefillah* by the kohein gadol or a blessing from Yaakov – it is a commandment that carries severe consequences when violated.

THE CHASHMONAIM AND THE TEFILLAH FOR THE MONARCHY

This leads to another paradox. When the Chashmonaim were in power – for their two-hundred-year reign, did the kohein gadol – during Bayis Sheni, often a Chashmonai – recite this very *tefillah*: “לא יעדי עביד שולטן מדבית יהודה” – May the kingdom not pass from the house of Yehudah?”

On one hand, the Gemara does not differentiate; the kohein gadol said it, regardless of his lineage. On the other hand, if the Ramban is correct that ruling as non-Yehudah kings was a violation, then reciting this *tefillah* would appear hypocritical and contradictory.

OTHER QUESTIONS

There are other questions regarding this *tefillah* of the kohein gadol, and maybe with a new approach, one can answer all of the questions:

This is the only line of that *tefillah* recited

in Aramaic, while the entirety of the kohein gadol's *tefillah* was otherwise in Hebrew. Why the inconsistency?

In general, Chazal discourage *davening* in Aramaic (*Shabbos* 12b). Why is this part in Aramaic as opposed to another language?

When the Rambam cites this *tefillah* (*Hilchos Avodas Yom HaKippurim*, Chapter 4), he writes it in Hebrew – “לא יסור שבט מבית יהודה” – and not in the Aramaic text found in the Gemara. Why does he change the language?

FEAR NOT

Rav Tzvi Zarkowski (*Beis Shmuel*, *Yoma* 53b) quotes the *sefer Chasdei Avos* (R. Yitzchak Yehuda Kutna, *siman* 14), who cites a discussion between the Kli Chemda and himself. The Kli Chemda explains that normally the *tefillah* would indeed be recited in Hebrew—like all of the kohein gadol's *tefillos* when leaving the Holy of Holies—but the **Chashmonaim** “out of fear” recited it in Aramaic.

We do not have the exact words of the Kli Chemda, only what R. Kutna cites. However, his intent may have been as follows: If the Chashmonaim recited this *tefillah* in clear Hebrew, publicly declaring that the monarchy belongs to Yehudah, it would appear hypocritical and might generate resentment or backlash. Saying it in Aramaic—which fewer people understood—softened that problem.

But we can ask that this itself raises a question: If they felt so uneasy, why did they assume the monarchy at all?



Rav Yonasan Eibshitz explains that the Chashmonaim believed that Yaakov's command applied only when a worthy descendant of Yehudah was available. In a moment of crisis, when the greatest and most capable leaders of the generation came from another *shevet*, they held that they were permitted to take power as a temporary measure—as placeholders—until a worthy descendant of Yehudah was available. Maybe the Chashmonaim believed that they had a different legitimate reason why they were allowed to assume the monarchy.

If so, it is understandable that they genuinely *davened* for the restoration of Yehudah's monarchy, even while they themselves ruled. They felt it was halachically justified in the moment, but publicly reciting the prayer in Hebrew would have fueled misunderstanding. Therefore, they recited it in Aramaic. Accordingly, the Gemara was referring to a time when a worthy descendant of Yehudah was unavailable.

ARAMAIC

R. Yitzchak Yehuda Kutna, however, rejects this approach. He notes that during the Bayis Sheni era, the Jewish population was already fluent in Aramaic. Saying it in Aramaic would not have concealed anything.

ר' צבי זרקובסקי

R' Zvi Hakohein (Hersh) Zarkowski (19 Elul 1920-20 Nisan 1984). Born in Gostynin, Poland, to a family of Strikover Chassidim. After a chance encounter with R' Elchanan Wasserman, he was invited to study in Baranovitch. Subsequently, he enrolled in the Knesses Beis Yitzchak Yeshivah in Kamenetz. Amid the Nazi invasion of Poland and Lithuania, he escaped to the Far East, passing through Japan, and ultimately settling in Shanghai, China. Following the war, he emigrated to the United States, in 1946. In 1949, he married Sarah Fekete (1927-2013), the daughter of R' Zvi Avigdor (1910-1969), who served as the Rav of the Nanasher shtetle in Williamsburg. R' Tzvi Hersh served as Rosh Kollel in Gur and Amshinov, and, following his father-in-law's passing, as Rav of the Shul. R' Tzvi edited and published works of the Rishonim from manuscript, including *Talmidei Rabbenu Yona to Maseches Avoda Zara* (Brooklyn, 1955) and *Tosafos HaRosh to Maseches Yoma* (Brooklyn, 1961). He also published his own novellae, entitled *Kedushas Har* (Brooklyn, 1971) and *Beis Shmuel on Avoda Zara* (Brooklyn, 1980). Following his passing, a committee was formed to continue publishing his writings, ultimately releasing *Beis Shmuel on Yoma* (Brooklyn, 2001), and a three-volume work on the *Sefer HaChinuch* entitled *Minchas Tzvi* (Brooklyn, 2008).



This issue has been dedicated as a *zechus* for the *neshamah* of **Mr. Shimon Tabak**, who was not *zocheh* to children of his own. Shimon was born in approximately 1905 in Nadvorna, Galicia. Both of his parents had *yichus* and were descended from *talmidei chachamim*. The arrival of WWI prevented him from being able to learn in yeshivah. He made his way to Prague, and eventually emigrated to Eretz Yisrael in the 1930s. Most of his relatives were murdered during WWII. He was proud of his *Torahdige* relatives and was known for his favorite saying, “Keep smiling.” He passed away on 23 Kislev 5748/1987.