



Towards the beginning of Parashat Ki-Tisa the Torah introduces us to the *shemen ha-mishcha*, the anointing oil that was used to formally consecrate the *Mishkan*, its various appurtenances and accessories, and the *kohanim* (30:22-33). In *Hilkhot Melakhim* (1:7), as well as in other contexts (e.g. *Sefer Ha-mitzvot, aseï* 35), Maimonides mentions that the anointing oil was used also for the formal consecration of kings. He writes that King David was anointed with the *shemen ha-mishcha* by the prophet Shemuel (Shemuel I 16:13), and this anointing sufficed for all his successors. The exception to this rule is a situation where a king's right to the throne is challenged, in which case he is anointed with the *shemen ha-mishcha* despite his being from the Davidic line.

Later in this chapter (1:9-10), Maimonides writes, "The kings from the house of David are the ones who remain forever...whereas if a king arises from the rest of Israel, his kingship will be discontinued from his family... Kings of Israel are not anointed with the anointing oil, but rather with balsam oil." In these two passages Maimonides establishes that:

- 1) only the Davidic dynasty, to the exclusion of any other line of leaders, will endure forever as a monarchical dynasty;
- 2) the prescribed *shemen ha-mishcha* was not required for the anointing of kings who do not descend from the Davidic dynasty.

The requirement to anoint a newly-appointed king with the *shemen ha-mishcha* applied only to a king who begins an eternal dynasty. Kings from the Northern Kingdom of Israel were not anointed with the *shemen ha-mishcha* because none of these kings established an everlasting dynasty.

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, in his *Meshekh Chokhma*, suggests that the source of this *halakha* may be found in the Torah's description of the anointing oil. God instructs Moshe with regard to this special oil, "And you shall tell the Israelites, 'This shall be sacred anointing oil for Me, for all your generations'" (30:31). He emphasizes that this oil is designated "for all your generations," which perhaps refers to the conferral of a status that endures for all time. The *shemen ha-mishcha* was required specifically for the consecration of those who would retain their respective status for eternity, namely, the high priests, and the first king of the eternal Jewish dynasty. By definition, this *mitzva* mandates the formal anointing only of founders of everlasting lines of distinction – the priesthood and the eternal kingship.

This explains why King Shaul, the first king of Israel, was anointed with the *shemen ha-mishcha* (Shemuel I 10:1) despite the fact that he did not establish a permanent dynasty. Later in the Book of Shemuel I (13:13-14), the prophet Shemuel informs Shaul that the eternal dynasty was to have emerged from him had he not disobeyed the prophet. Clearly, Shaul was initially destined to be the founder of the permanent line of kingship, and thus naturally the obligation of *shemen ha-mishcha* required that he be anointed with the special oil.

Maimonides writes (Hilkhos Kelei Ha-mikdash 1:5) based on the Talmud (Keritot 5b) that the original supply of anointing oil that Moshe prepared when the *Mishkan* was erected sufficed for all kings and *kohanim* throughout the First Temple period. The Gemara indicates that this supply, which was hidden before the Temple's destruction, will resurface during Messianic times and will be used for all future kings and *kohanim gedolim*. Thus, all kings and high priests that have ever served and that will ever serve will either themselves be anointed by the initial supply of *shemen ha-mishcha*, or will descend from an ancestor who had been anointed with that oil – the same oil that was used for the formal consecration of the *Mishkan* and its appurtenances. This is perhaps intended to instruct members of a royal or priestly dynasty to see themselves as *kelei ha-Mikdash*, as "sacred utensils" designated for the service of God, and to remind them that they were not assigned their position of leadership for their personal glory and aggrandizement. Having been consecrated with the same oil used for the vessels of the *Mikdash*, the kings and *kohanim* will fulfill their duties with this sense of spiritual mission, with the understanding that these leadership dynasties were, like the *Mikdash*, established to provide religious guidance and inspiration, and to foster and intensify *Am Yisrael's* relationship with the Almighty.