The Gemara cites another incident in which a Heavenly voice reprimanded Saul:

וּבְשָׁעָה שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ שָׁאוּל לְדוֹאֵג סֹב אַתָּה וּפְגַע בַּכֹּהֲנִים – *"You circle around and slay the Kohanim!"*[22] – יָצְאָה בַּת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה לוֹ – a Heavenly voice emanated and said to him: אַל־תִּרְשָׁע הַרְבֵּה – *"Be not overly wicked."*[23]

The Gemara draws a comparison between the sins of Saul and David:

אָמַר רַב חוּנָא – Rav Huna said: כַּמָּה לֹא חָלֵי וְלֹא מַרְגִּישׁ גַּבְרָא – How spared from sickness and worry is the person whose help is his Master in Heaven! שָׁאוּל בְּאַחַת וְעָלְתָה לוֹ – Saul erred in one sin, and it was reckoned against him, דָּוִד בִּשְׁתַּיִם וְלֹא עָלְתָה לוֹ – whereas David erred in two sins, and it was not reckoned against him.[24]

The Gemara identifies the sin of Saul to which Rav Huna referred:

שָׁאוּל בְּאַחַת – "Saul erred in one sin." מַאי הִיא – What was it? מַעֲשֶׂה דַּאֲגָג – The incident of Agag. Against God's orders, Saul spared the life of Agag, king of the Amalekites.[25]

The Gemara asks:

וְהָא אִיכָּא מַעֲשֶׂה דְּנוֹב עִיר הַכֹּהֲנִים – But there was also the incident of Nov, the city of Kohanim.[26] Why did Rav Huna mention only one sin (namely, the sin of sparing Agag), and not the sin of Nov as well?

The Gemara answers:

אַמַּעֲשֶׂה דַּאֲגָג כְּתִיב – Regarding the incident of Agag, it is written: "נִחַמְתִּי כִּי־הִמְלַכְתִּי אֶת־שָׁאוּל לְמֶלֶךְ" – [God said:] *I regret that I made Saul king.*[27] Since this was said immediately after the incident of Agag, and before the incident of Nov, it is evident that the sin of sparing Agag sufficed on its own to warrant the ultimate punishment – the loss of the monarchy.[28] Therefore, it was not necessary for Rav Huna to mention any other sin but that one.

The Gemara now identifies the two sins of David to which Rav Huna referred:

דָּוִד בִּשְׁתַּיִם – "David erred in two sins." מַאי נִינְהוּ – What were they? דְּאוּרִיָּה וְדַהֲוָה – The incident of Uriyah[29] and the incident of incitement (i.e. when David was incited to take a census of Israel).[30]

The Gemara asks:

וְהָא אִיכָּא נָמֵי מַעֲשֶׂה רַבַּת שֶׁבַע – But there was also the incident of Bathsheba![31]

The Gemara answers:

הָתָם אַפְרְעֵהּ מִינַּיְיהוּ – In that case, punishment was exacted from him, דִּכְתִיב "וְאֶת־הַכִּבְשָׂה יְשַׁלֵּם אַרְבַּעְתָּיִם" – as it is written: *And he shall pay fourfold for the ewe* [a metaphor for Bathsheba].[32]

NOTES

that mercy will result in cruelty for other people (*Meiri*). [Though Agag was eventually killed, he fathered a child in the interim, from whom Haman was descended (*Megillah* 13a). As related in the Book of *Esther*, Haman sought to kill the entire Jewish people and was prevented from doing so only by a miracle.]

22. *I Samuel* 22:18. Saul, believing that David posed a threat to his kingship, sought to kill David. In his flight from Saul, David came upon the town of Nov, where a community of Kohanim lived. He told the inhabitants that he was carrying out a secret mission for the king. The Kohanim believed his story and gave him provisions and arms. Saul's chief servant, Doeg, witnessed this incident and subsequently slandered the Kohanim to Saul. He told Saul that they had aided David although they knew him to be Saul's enemy. Saul thereupon ordered that the Kohanim of Nov be put to death (Chs. 21,22 ibid.).

23. *Ecclesiastes* 7:17.

24. One who has God's support can be confident that no misfortune will befall him. [That is, he has no grounds for concern that he will be punished to the degree that his sins apparently warrant (see Gemara further).] This lesson is borne out by contrasting God's treatment of Saul and David. Saul committed only one sin and God penalized him with death on account of it, thereby abolishing his dynasty forever. On the other hand, David committed two sins and yet he was not punished for either one [to that extent] (*Rashi*).

The commentators endeavor to explain why David was treated more favorably than Saul. *Meiri* emphasizes that every person is rewarded and punished in accordance with his deeds. However, God's reasons and methods are not known to us. Although we might see a person receive a reward or punishment he does not seem to deserve, that does not provide

27. *I Samuel* 15:11.

28. I.e. the monarchy would not be transferred to his descendants (see *Tos. Yeshanim, Tos. HaRosh* and *Ritva*; cf. *Sfas Emes* and *Hagahos Yavetz*).

29. King David arranged for Uriyah the Hittite (the husband of Bathsheba) to be sent to the forefront of the battlefield, where he was slain, as recounted in *II Samuel* Ch. 11 (see Gemara further).

The Gemara in *Shabbos* (56a) derives from Scripture that David was not punished for his treatment of Uriyah (see *Maharsha* ibid.; see also

הָתָם אֵיפְרוּשֵׁי אֵיפְרְשׁוּהוּ מִינַּהּ מִנַּהּ לֵיהּ לְגַבֵּי מִיכָּה וּמִכָּאן לְמִי שֶׁעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה אַחַת לְעוֹלָם אֵין רָעָה מְצוּיָה לוֹ וּמִכָּאן לְמִי שֶׁעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה אַחַת בָּעוֹלָם שֶׁאֵין רָעָה מְצוּיָה לוֹ בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא

שִׁשָּׁה חֲדָשִׁים בְּשַׁמֶּרֶת דָּוִד וְכוּ׳. מֵימָה לֵי לְיֵ״ט שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא מְלַאכְתּוֹ מְרֻבָּה מִשֶּׁל חֲבֵרָיו וְיִטָּרֵד בָּהּ וְלֹא יִכְנֹס לִשְׁמֹחַ בְּיוֹם טוֹב וְלֹא יִשְׁמַח וְלֹא יֹאכַל