חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

KOZHNITZ · CHAYEI SARA, AVODAT YISRAEL

How David grew so holy in old age he felt no warmth

Avodat Yisrael

A tzaddik's good deeds throughout his days form a garment for his neshamah (soul), drawn down from its root above, and as he nears death all these garments of holy days join together into one; this is why King David, having so thoroughly subdued his yetzer hara (evil inclination) in his old age that he could no longer even feel physical warmth from Avishag, approached Bat-Sheva at the end not from desire but with pure intent, directing his mind toward holy yichudim (unifications). AI SUMMARY

"And King David was old and advanced in years," etc. Behold, the tzaddik (righteous one), the holy one of Hashem, our teacher Rabbi Baruch, grandson of the Riva"sh, said in his interpretation of the verse "And Avraham was old and advanced in years," based on what is found in the Zohar HaKadosh (Holy Zohar) regarding why it is written "Avraham, Avraham," "Moshe, Moshe"—namely, that this refers to above and below. That is, every tzaddik below has a root, and the quarry of his neshamah (soul) is in Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden), and there he is truly attached, while in this world he dwells only temporarily. Through all his holy deeds and upright ways, he draws down his holiness from the root of his neshamah, which is above, into this world. And this is the meaning of "And Avraham was old"—that is, from the hidden world, which is called by the name "old age"—"advanced in years," meaning to draw it down into this world, which is characterized by "days" and time. So far his words.

And certainly the same interpretation applies to King David, that he drew down his holiness below and sanctified the days and the time. Now, a person's days—the days of his life—are like a kind of garment for the neshamah, for through the good days in which he conducts himself in his righteousness, he fashions a garment for his neshamah above, drawing it down below. And presumably, before a person's death, all the garments and the deeds of mitzvot (commandments) in which he conducted himself throughout the days of his life gather together as one. And this is the meaning of "And the days of David drew near to die"—that is, at the end of his days, all his days joined and drew near together to become one, and presumably his holiness was exceedingly great and wondrous.

"And they covered him with garments, but he received no warmth." Our Sages of blessed memory, in their derash (homiletical interpretation), said: from the fear of the angel he became cold—see there. Now David, due to the greatness of his holiness, said, "My heart is slain within me," which teaches that he killed the yetzer hara (evil inclination) through fasting, as our Sages of blessed memory said. And certainly, the older he grew, the more his wisdom and holiness increased, and especially after his distress and trembling from the fear of the angel, the spirit of the yetzer hara dissolved from him, and it could no longer incite him to anything. And this is the meaning of "And they covered him with garments, but he received no warmth"—that is, he could no longer clothe himself in garments and serve Hashem, for the yetzer hara had departed from him completely, and he had

become like an angel of God. If so, he no longer had any vitality of this world, for what business does an angel of Hashem have with this world?

"And his servants said, let them seek for the king a young virgin, and let her be a companion to him." This was Avishag the Shunammite, who was added beyond the eighteen wives, and he was not permitted to come to her; they placed her in his bosom. And through his abstaining from her, so as not to come to her, he served Hashem (God) properly, and thus days and garments were made for him from the deeds of his service of Hashem through the subduing of his yetzer (inclination). And Avishag said to him, "Choseirim," like a thief she steals my soul—for Shlomo takes hold of it, meaning that the power of the yetzer hara and the physical sense of touch had been completely removed from you, and if so, you are not serving Hashem through this abstinence—until he summoned Bat-Sheva into the chamber.

And Rabbi Yose said in the name of Rav: this teaches that she wiped herself with thirteen cloths, showing thereby that he still had physical capacity. Yet he was holy and pure and ascetic, intending only to perform yichudim (unifications) directing his mind toward the thirteen wondrous and lofty attributes. And understand this.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)