

Renouncing one's dignity for God's dignity

אין לך אדם בישראל שביזה עצמו על המצוות יותר מדוד. מפני מה ביזה עצמו על המצוות? מפני שהיו מביטין בארון ומתים (שמואל ב א:יט) (סנהדרין ב:ד יב.).

In the scene where David finally gets possession of the Ark of the Covenant we read that he was jumping and dancing in joy (II Sam. 6:16). David's actions seem unbecoming of a King whose post requires of him a certain level-headedness and correctness to maintain an image of respect.

However, the Rabbis discerned a noble motive in David's behavior. The last time the Ark was retrieved from the Philistines the People of Israel looked inside of it showing a lack of regard.

It is noteworthy that the Rabbis suppress God's active role in their punishment that we see in the Scripture. While in the latter we read "and God struck the People of Beth Shemesh" (II Sam. 1:19) in the former we read "they would die".

As a reaction to the past, David degraded himself before the Ark of the Covenant to evoke a sense of regard in the Jewish People. A king acting with informality towards something may be more effective than with formality. David does not lose his dignity in the excitement of the moment but consciously gives it up for the dignity of the Ark of the Covenant.

The message of this Rabbinic teaching is that it permissible, if not encourageable for one to step out of his ranks when the necessity arises, especially when the outcome is honoring the Torah.