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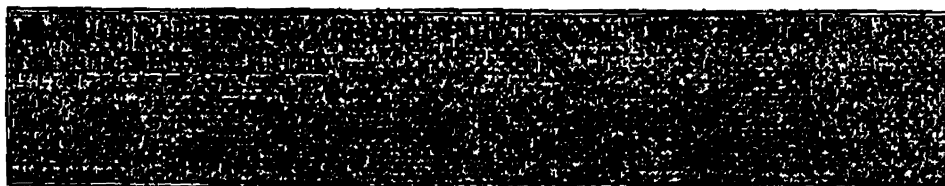
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**Bridging the Divide:**  
**An Exploration of the Haftarah Portions of the**  
**Book of Exodus and Their Connection to the**  
**Weekly Torah Portions**

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Bridging the Divide:  
An Exploration of the Haftarah Portions of the Book of Exodus and Their Connection to  
the Weekly Torah Portions

Debra Bennet

The goal of my thesis was to create a detailed and precise exploration of the connections between the haftarah and Torah portions of the Book of Exodus. Once having determined both similarities and differences, I suggested alternative haftarot that could serve as more relevant texts for a modern audience. I chose these alternative texts from the Neviim and Ketuvim sections of the Tanakh, and additionally from modern writings. Though I focused on the Ashkenazic cycle of Torah readings, I also consulted the Sephardic haftarah readings. Moreover, I examined the triennial cycle of Torah and haftarah portions.

To determine connections between the two texts, I consulted a number of haftarah commentaries, including Gunther Plaut's *The Haftarah Commentary*, Michael Fishbane's *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarot*, and Issachar Yaakovson's *Hazon HaMikra*. I also used *The Jewish Study Bible* and several versions of *The Anchor Bible*. For modern material, I examined Jewish books of poetry, in addition to feminist writings on the Torah.

The thesis consists of eleven chapters, divided by Torah portions. In addition, the appendix includes translations of *Hazon HaMikra* by Rabbi Issachar Yaakovson and a complete text of each alternative haftarah.

I hope that my thesis will assist Reform Jews in engaging with the haftarah text, both through the study of the Torah portions and alternative haftarah readings.

## Introduction

The Song of Deborah, Solomon's construction of the Temple, Isaiah's descriptions of God's holiness. Each of these events is a key moment in the collective Jewish memory. And yet, they do not appear in our central holy book, the Torah. Instead, they are part of the *Neviim*, the prophets' section of the Tanakh. Therefore, each year, it is only when we read the haftarah portion on Shabbat, not the Torah portion, that these events again come to life.

Most of the Reform congregations today read a part of the Torah portion each Shabbat and then conclude with the haftarah. Sermons, Bar/Bat Mitzvah speeches, and Shabbat study almost always seem to focus exclusively upon the complexities and nuances of the Torah portion. As a result, an essential part of our literature and Jewish past, the haftarah, is commonly forgotten.

Though the historical development of the set haftarah portions is unclear, many Jewish scholars argue that the haftarot began as independent collections linked in one way or another to the Torah portions. These were later brought together and standardized in different *minhagim*.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the organization of Torah and haftarot for an annual cycle, at least one separate set was compiled for the triennial cycle. Joseph Offer has reconstructed the triennial list in his 1988 article, "Sidrei N'ivi'im Ukh'tuvim."

Though certain literature does expound upon the connection between the Torah and haftarah readings, the connection between them is often vague. In many cases, the haftarot simply relate to the first line of the Torah portion. In any event, since Reform

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Fisbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarot. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), xix-xxxix.



Jews often choose to read a section of the Torah that is not located at the beginning of the portion, this connection is not always clear within Reform congregations.

This thesis explores the connection between the Torah and haftarah readings in the book of Exodus. Through this process, I hope to shed new light on the traditional readings, examining the links that may have connected them to the Torah portion. My thesis also suggests possible alternative haftarah portions that may help Reform Jews today understand how the haftarot can bring new meaning to the Torah portions. To begin this process, I will explore the Torah portion, as well as the entire haftarah readings of the Ashkenazi tradition. I will also consult the haftarah readings of the Sephardic tradition. Using *Hazon HaMikra* by Issachar Jacobson as a guide, I will investigate the connections between the two readings. Then, based on the depth of the similarities—is there more than a beginning word that connects one portion to the other—the presence of significant differences, and questions relating to the relevance to a modern audience, I will evaluate whether to contribute alternative haftarot.

In the cases where the connection no longer seems to be relevant, I will explore several new possibilities for a haftarah portion. My sources for this exploration are the Triennial cycle, additional passages in Neviim, and potential readings in Ketuvim. I include Ketuvim because geonic tradition indicates that Ketuvim were once part of the lectionary, and because Reform ideology allows (and even encourages) the expansion of the canon. For the same reason, I will explore modern writings, particularly by women, so as to be more inclusive regarding liturgical voices from our tradition. When suggesting these haftarot, I will also designate a part of the Torah portion with which the text can be read. As mentioned above, since most Reform synagogues today do not read

the entire Torah portion, they may miss the links that do exist between the haftarah and Torah portions. Therefore, by matching a new haftarah with a section of the Torah portion, I hope to help build a stronger connection for Reform Jews between the haftarah and Torah portions. I would add, the goal of suggesting alternative haftarot is not only to explicate the sections of the Torah portion which are likely to be read, but also to elucidate parts of the portion which may be confusing or seemingly non-relevant to a modern audience. It is my hope that work of this kind will encourage Reform Jews to study, explore and question those passages of the Torah portion, which many Jews today ignore.

## Chapter 1: Shemot

Shemot, the first Torah portion in the book of Exodus, Exodus 1:1-6:1, has much in common with the haftarah portion with which it is read, Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23. To begin with, verbal connections link the two texts. The haftarah portion commences with a statement that includes the Hebrew word *habaim*.<sup>2</sup> In the Torah, the portion begins with the words, “Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came (*habaim*) into Egypt with Jacob...”<sup>3</sup> In this passage, the word *habaim* refers to the children of Israel who “came” into Egypt. In the haftarah passage, the meaning of *habaim* is not as clear. Michael Fishbane, in *The JPS Torah Commentary on the Haftarah*, suggests three possible understandings for this word. The first suggestion is that the word “days” should be added to the verse. Thus, the verse would read, “[In days] to come, Jacob shall strike root...” *Habaim* would therefore be a reference to the coming days when the children of Israel will flourish. As Fishbane notes, this understanding connects to the eschatological formula, *hayom hahu*, or *in the days to come*. An alternative to this reading is “the word ‘haba’im”...refer(s) to the ‘coming’ or ‘ingathering’ of Israel to its homeland.”<sup>4</sup> A final understanding is that *haba’im* is a reference to “the coming of the Israelite exiles to Egypt, where they multiplied just as during their first descent into Egypt.”<sup>5</sup> Though the first two suggestions do not directly correspond to our understanding of the portion in Exodus, the latter does. As Jacob and his descendents journeyed into the land of Egypt, “were fruitful and increased

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 27:6.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 1:1.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 81.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 81.

abundantly,"<sup>6</sup> so too did the Israelites, exiled from the land of Israel, journey to Egypt and flourish. Nevertheless, though the other suggestions do not relate in this direct manner, the similarity in language connects the two passages. The understanding of the passages may not correspond, but the words do. As Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson writes in his book *Hazon HaMikra*:

There are different explanations with which one may explicate the selection of the excerpts from which this haftarah has been put together. It is possible that one word which appears in the beginning of the Torah portion and the beginning of the haftarah influenced the choice of the first excerpt.<sup>7</sup>

Additional verbal similarities connect the two portions. Both passages mention "Israel" and "Jacob" in the first verse. Moreover, both continue with a mention of how Jacob and Israel flourish or will flourish. For instance, the passage in Isaiah reads, "Israel shall sprout and blossom."<sup>8</sup> The passage in Exodus similarly states, "And the children of Israel were fruitful."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, from the very first few lines of the Torah portion and the haftarah portion, verbal connections arise.

This trend continues in the latter parts of the passages. In Isaiah 27:7, the prophet plays with the sound of the word "makah." He says, *hak'makat makaihu hikahu?* or "Was he beaten as his beater has been?"<sup>10</sup> Several questions arise from this verse: Who is being beaten? And, who are the ones who are beating? Most commentators assume that the beaten is Israel. As Ronald F. Clements writes in the *New Century Bible Commentary*, "... 'them,' which is singular in Hebrew and should be understood as

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 1:7.

<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 144.

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 27:6.

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 1:7.

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 27:7.

collective, is undefined, but must refer to Israel-Jacob as in verse 9.”<sup>11</sup> The second question is more challenging to answer. Clements believes the one who is beating is God. W.G. Plaut in *The Haftarah Commentary* agrees.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Fishbane offers several other interpretations. The subject of this verse may be God, but it may also be Assyria or Egypt.<sup>13</sup> Either way, Isaiah clearly emphasizes the verb *makkah*.

In Exodus, this verb also plays a significant role. In Exodus 2:11, Moses sees an Egyptian *makkeh*, or beating, an Israelite slave. In response, Moses kills the Egyptian and ultimately escapes to Midian. But, the use of this verb in this text does not end there. In fact, one chapter later, God uses the same verbal root when speaking to Moses. “And I will put forth My hand and smite (*makkah*) Egypt with all My wonders.”<sup>14</sup> Again, the two passages are connected through their verbal similarities. Moreover, if Egypt is the subject in Isaiah 27:7, then the two portions connect thematically as well. Just as the Egyptians are the “beaters” of Israel, so too in Exodus 2:11, the Egyptian master beats the Israelite slave. Thus, the use of *makkah* relates the haftarah and Torah portions.

The similarities between the passages in the haftarah and Torah are not limited to verbal connections; the two also relate thematically. A common link is the descriptions of Israelite suffering. In the haftarah, the suffering is a future reality. “Something like a storm of massive, torrential rain shall be hurled with force to the ground. Trampled underfoot shall be the proud crowns of the drunkards of Ephraim.”<sup>15</sup> Isaiah warns the Northern Kingdom of their inevitable downfall. Having strayed from God, they face a

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<sup>11</sup> Ronald F. Clements and Matthew Block, *New Century Bible Commentary: Isaiah 1-39* (Michigan: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1980) 221.

<sup>12</sup> W. Guther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1996) 123.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 82.

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 3:20.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 28:2-4.

future of punishment and anguish. In a similar way, the Israelites suffer tremendously under the hand of Pharaoh. For instance, Exodus relays, "...they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens."<sup>16</sup> As the portion progresses, the affliction increases. As in the haftarah, the initial future, in addition to the present, appears wrought with suffering. "Let heavier work be laid upon the men."<sup>17</sup> The Israelites in both the haftarah and Torah portions face anguish and affliction.

Yet with this reality comes some semblance of hope. Despite the suffering, there is evidence that God deeply cares for the people. In the haftarah, Isaiah foretells of a time when a reward will again come to the Israelites. In Isaiah 27:12, he states, "And in that day, the Eternal will beat out from the channel of the Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt; and you shall be picked up one by one, O children of Israel!"<sup>18</sup> There is an inherent sense in this passage that God will care for the Israelites, not only as a group, but also as individuals. The phrase "one by one," according to Dr. J.H. Hertz implies "with such loving care for each individual Israelites, that not a single soul shall be lost."<sup>19</sup> God's concern for the people is certainly demonstrated in the Exodus passage as well. When the Israelites cried out to God on account of their suffering, "God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them."<sup>20</sup> The haftarah and Torah share suffering, but they also share God's concern for the Israelites' well being.

This commonality continues with the foreshadowing, in both passages, of future events. In the haftarah, the prophet promises the people that there will be an end to their anguish. At this time, he prophesies, "a great ram's horn shall be sounded; and the

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<sup>16</sup> Exodus 1:11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 5:9.

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 27:12.

<sup>19</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 226.

<sup>20</sup> Exodus 2:25.

strayed who are in the land of Assyria and the expelled who are in the land of Egypt shall come and worship the Eternal on the holy mount, in Jerusalem."<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, the people will honor God again in the city of Jerusalem. Their current woes will end with their return to the land of Israel and their return to God. Likewise, the Exodus tells of the future redemption of the people and their worship of God. When God instructs Moses on what to do and say when he returns to Egypt to free the Israelites, God says, "And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."<sup>22</sup> God reminds Moses that the Israelites' plight is only temporary. They soon will be free to worship their God, as Isaiah makes clear in the haftarah.

The hopeful nature of these narratives is also conveyed in the description of the people's ultimate redemption. Isaiah describes this future event with extraordinary detail. He remarks that God "will be a crown of beauty and a diadem of glory for the remnant of God's people."<sup>23</sup> Moreover, those who deserve rewards will receive them. As Isaiah remarks that God will serve as "a spirit of judgement for him who sits in judgement and of valor for those who repel attacks at the gate."<sup>24</sup> The final two verses of the haftarah continue this description of the Israelites' redemption. God will save them, as God saved Abraham.<sup>25</sup> The Torah portion also describes the people's redemption. God states, "I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with various wonders which I will work upon them; after that he (Pharaoh) shall let you go."<sup>26</sup> Again the connection of the Israelites to their forefathers proves to be an important factor. In fact, God responds to the cries of

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<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 27:13.

<sup>22</sup> Exodus 3:12.

<sup>23</sup> Isaiah 28:5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 28:6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 29:22.

<sup>26</sup> Exodus 3:20.

the Israelites for the very reason that he is reminded of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.<sup>27</sup> The haftarah and Torah portions intersect with their descriptions of redemption, enabled by God's covenant with Abraham.

Another connection between these two portions is their portrayal of the attitude of the people towards their leaders. Instead of listening to the warnings of the prophet, the people disregard Isaiah's prophecy. Yet, they do not just ignore him, instead they mock him. As the text reports, "They (the people) refuse to listen. To them the word of the Eternal is: 'Mutter upon mutter, murmur upon murmur...'"<sup>28</sup> In this example, "Isaiah's audience disregards his poetic warnings as monotonous nonsense."<sup>29</sup> Ya'akovson supports this understanding, describing the derision with which the people respond to the prophet.<sup>30</sup> In the Torah portion, the people also question and distrust the words and actions of their leaders, Moses and Aaron. When Pharaoh increases the strain of their labor, they angrily come to Moses and Aaron, saying, "May the Eternal look upon you and punish you for making us loathsome to Pharaoh and his courtiers."<sup>31</sup> The relationship between the people and their leaders is not one of mutual understanding. As in the haftarah, the people do not trust their leaders.

Issachar Ya'akovson suggests one additional similarity. He states that both texts convey the understanding that the people first need to suffer in order to be worthy of their reward. He writes, "...we hear in the parashah that the children of Jacob descend to Egypt, and in the crucible of poverty, they were refined until they were worthy to be

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 2:24.

<sup>28</sup> Isaiah 8:13.

<sup>29</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 837.

<sup>30</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 145.

<sup>31</sup> Exodus 5:21.



redeemed.”<sup>32</sup> He conveys that this example is similar to the situation in Isaiah. There, he writes, “after hundreds of years, again the storm comes upon them and agitated and distanced them from their land until their experience in being in a foreign land and the exile make them fit again to inherit the land.”<sup>33</sup> The people need to become worthy of their reward. They have strayed from God and only when they return, can they merit redemption. Ya’akovson’s arguments seems to hold validity in the face of the haftarah. After all, in Isaiah 27:8, the prophet expresses this notion explicitly. He says, “Assuredly, by this alone shall Jacob’s sin be purged away; this is the only price for removing his guilt; That he make all the altar-stones like shattered blocks of chalk with no sacred post left standing, nor any incense altar.”<sup>34</sup> Fishbane affirms this argument. He writes, “The nation’s sin was to be expiated through banishment and the destruction of false worship. This is the only required condition.”<sup>35</sup> Yet, in the Torah portion, this argument seems much less relevant. The text does not explicitly convey that the Israelites are suffering due to their own sins. Furthermore, their redemption comes not when they have repented, but when Pharaoh has suffered enough to let them go.

This contrast, I believe, outweighs many of the similarities between these two texts. Certainly God does pay attention to God’s people in both instances. And, both texts speak of suffering and future redemption. Yet, in the haftarah text, the present anguish is inherently linked to the sins of the people. If they did not sin, they would not have been punished. And if they do not suffer and stop sinning, they will not be rewarded. In contrast, the anguish in the Torah portion appears to be the result of

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<sup>32</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya’akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 145.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 145.

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 27:9.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 82.

Pharaoh's fears, not of Israel's wrongdoing. Pharaoh tells his people, "'Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war, they may join our enemies in fighting against us.'"<sup>36</sup> This understanding is in stark contrast to the impetuous for punishment in the haftarah. Isaiah describes the people by saying "...they are dazed by liquor; they are muddled in their visions, they stumble in judgement."<sup>37</sup> Therefore, despite the verbal and thematic similarities, I think it is problematic to join these two passages.

At alternative haftarah portion for Shemot is Jeremiah 23:1-8. These verses begin the Sephardic reading for Shemot, which consists of Jeremiah 23:1-2:3. Like the Torah portion, this haftarah describes the current anguish of the people. They have been "scattered and lost."<sup>38</sup> They are in exile, separated from one another and from their land. In their current situation they suffer, like the Israelite slaves in Egypt. In response to this circumstance, God shows a deep concern for the people. God does not abandon them to suffering, but instead promises to protect them. "I will Myself gather all that is left of My flock from the lands where they are scattered; I will bring them back to their homes, where they will be fruitful and grow in number."<sup>39</sup> Just as God "looked upon the Israelites, and...took notice of them"<sup>40</sup> in the Exodus portion, God responds to the people in a very personal and direct way in this haftarah. The people are God's flock. In the Tanakh, this image of a shepherd and his flock often demonstrates a concerned and caring relationship. As in Psalm 23, "The Eternal is my shepherd; I lack nothing. He

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<sup>36</sup> Exodus 1:9.

<sup>37</sup> Isaiah 28:7.

<sup>38</sup> Jeremiah 23:1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 23:3.

<sup>40</sup> Exodus 2:25.

makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me to water in places of repose; He renews my life; He guides me in right paths as befits His name.”<sup>41</sup> God, as shepherd, protects the flock, caring for them and for their needs. Like the description in Exodus, God is not a distant deity, with little concern for the people. God protects them in the haftarah portion.

Interestingly, it is Moses in the Torah portion who is the shepherd. “Now Moses, tending the flock (*tzon*) of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian...”<sup>42</sup> As God cares for God’s flock (*tzon*), the people, once Moses has escaped from Egypt, he watches over his own flock. Furthermore, in this haftarah portion, God promises the people that God will appoint a qualified and caring leader to protect them. “‘The time is coming,’ says the Eternal One, ‘when I will raise up a true descendant of David, a wise ruler who will do what is just and right all over the land.’”<sup>43</sup> In order to alter the current suffering of the people, God will select a new, just leader. In Exodus, God uses this same strategy. God turns to Moses, a caring shepherd, to return to Egypt and free the people.<sup>44</sup> Through human agency, God saves the people from their suffering in the haftarah and Torah portions.

Another significant similarity between these two portions is the description of how leaders can wrong their people. In the haftarah, God blames the leaders of Israel for the evil that has come upon the people. God says, “Shame on rulers who let the flock that was theirs to tend be scattered and lost!”<sup>45</sup> The current suffering is the fault of the leaders’, not the people. Likewise, Pharaoh leads his people astray by enslaving the

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<sup>41</sup> Psalm 23:1-3.

<sup>42</sup> Exodus 3:1.

<sup>43</sup> Jeremiah 23:5.

<sup>44</sup> Exodus 3:10.

<sup>45</sup> Jeremiah 23:1.

Israelites. In fear, he encourages his subjects to oppress the people of Israel.<sup>46</sup>

Ultimately, his people face plague upon plague. They cry out to their leader, "How long shall this one be a snare to us? Let the men go to worship the Eternal their God."<sup>47</sup> The leaders fail to protect the very people that they lead.

Verbally, the two passages also relate. In the haftarah, God repeats the phrase "the time is coming (*baim*)"<sup>48</sup> in two different verses. God then describes a future where the people will be safe and secure in their land. Just as the haftarah portion in Isaiah related to the Torah portion due to this Hebrew word, this portion connects as well. "These are the names of the sons of Israel who came (*habaim*) to Egypt."<sup>49</sup> The haftarah text uses the word *baim* to describe a future period, while the Torah portion speaks of the people who come, *habaim*. Though the verbal similarity does not correspond to a thematic one, the repetition of this word in both passages links these texts.

The portions relate in one final way: the haftarah portion renews the redemption of the Torah portion. In Jeremiah 23:7-8, God says:

The time is coming...when people will no longer swear by me as the living God who brought Israel out of Egypt, but as the living God who brought the offspring of the House of Israel out of the north country, and out of all the lands where they are scattered. And they will live in their own land.

God promises to save the people from exile. This new redemption will replace the older redemption in the minds and words of the Israelites. As God assures the people in the Torah portion that they will one day be safe, God reassures the people in the haftarah portion that they will find security. As God has delivered them in the past, God will deliver them again in the future.

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<sup>46</sup> Exodus 1:8-11.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 10:7.

<sup>48</sup> Jeremiah 23:5, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Exodus 1:1.

Despite these similarities, one prominent difficulty develops, which may hinder the reading of these two texts together. The haftarah portion blames the Israelite leaders for their missteps. Due to their faulty leadership, the people of Israel now suffer. Whereas no Israelites are blamed for the slavery in Egypt, certain Israelites are blamed for the exile. This difference again poses the question, should one read these portions together? Yet, one significant distinction arises in Jeremiah 23:1-8, which did not arise in the Isaiah text. The individuals who are responsible are the leaders of the nation. In a post-Holocaust, post-9/11 world, it is troublesome to claim that we are always at fault for the punishments we receive. But, this haftarah portion does not say the people themselves are responsible. The people are one step removed from this blame. Therefore, it may be easier to relate to and understand this haftarah portion, because this text does not say: you have sinned, therefore you are punished. Instead, the portion says that others have wronged you. If God does not place the blame upon the people in the Torah portion, there is no reason to read a haftarah portion where God does hold the people responsible. Therefore, Jeremiah 23:1-8 may be an important alternative to the traditional haftarah portion for Shemot.

In analyzing the haftarah and Torah portions, it is also significant to consider which parts of the Torah portion Reform Jews read. Since most Reform congregations do not complete the entire portion, several key parts of the Torah that relate to the haftarah are not even be included in the reading. Exodus begins with a short genealogy, continuing with a description of the harsh conditions with which the Israelites currently live. Not only are the Israelites burdened by labor, but their first born sons are threatened by Pharaoh's decree to kill each one. God does not respond until the end of chapter two,

when the Israelites cry out, once many years have passed and Moses has already grown.<sup>50</sup>

It is at this moment that God calls out to Moses and begins the process of redemption.

Exodus 1:1-3:6 includes some of the most significant events of the entire book of Exodus: the impetus for enslavement, the beginnings of slavery, the birth of Moses, and God's call to Moses. Therefore, these verses are likely to be read in Reform congregations. In reading these first two chapters, a more relevant and appropriate haftarah text could be an excerpt from Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld's article, "With Strong Hands and Outstretched Arms" in *The Women's Passover Companion: Women's Reflections on the Festival of Freedom*. Anisfeld asks the pertinent questions, "Why is it that God does not intervene to bring an end to the suffering of the Israelites until they cry out?"<sup>51</sup> The Torah nearly completes two chapters describing the Israelites' suffering and Moses' early life, without including God's reaction. Why is God absent until this point in the story? Anisfeld examines several possible explanations, the primary being that the people need to be aware of their suffering before God can save them. Moreover, Anisfeld creates a parallel between the cry of the people to God and the cry of God to Moses. "God's emphatic double call to Moses is a cry for help—a cry that echoes the cry of the Israelite people just a few verses earlier..."<sup>52</sup> Through Rabbi Anisfeld's exploration of her question, why God waited to respond, and her linking of the people's call and God's, her piece can serve as a possible alternative haftarah for the portion Shemot.

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<sup>50</sup> Exodus 2:21-23.

<sup>51</sup> Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, "'With Strong Hands and Outstretched Arms,'" *The Women's Passover Companion: Women's Reflections on the Festival of Freedom* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002) 130.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 131.

If a congregation, instead, reads the section describing God's call to Moses through the burning bush, Yannai's poem "Moses the Messenger" is an appropriate alternative haftarah. In his poem, Yannai describes the day during which Moses encounters the burning bush. Moses' character transforms from an eager individual, rushing to the place where he will meet God, to a leader whose "heart was strengthened by looking at the flame."<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Yannai describes God's own reaction to the suffering of the people. Just as God "took notice of them"<sup>54</sup> in the Torah portion, God expresses that the "people's distress is His distress, and their salvation is His own."<sup>55</sup> God is, once again, not a distant, elusive God, but a caring deity, who responds to the needs of the people. Yannai transforms the story of the burning bush into a personal account, exploring the emotions and thoughts of Moses and God as they encounter each other for the first time.

Between Moses' departure from Midian and reunion with Aaron, a strange story occurs. In the middle of the night, God comes to the encampment of Moses and Zipporah and sought to kill "him." The text does not explain who God attempts to kill, stating simply "him." In response, Zipporah "took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin...saying, 'You are truly a bridegroom of blood to me!'"<sup>56</sup> God departs from the encampment and the person is safe. The text does not explain whom God wanted to kill or why the circumcision of Moses' son saved that person. Moreover, the reader is unsure why Zipporah performs the circumcision or why this story is relevant at this point in the Torah

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<sup>53</sup> Yannai, "Moses the Messenger" The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse (England: Penguin Books, 1981) 219-220.

<sup>54</sup> Exodus 2:21.

<sup>55</sup> Yannai, "Moses the Messenger" The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse (England: Penguin Books, 1981) 220.

<sup>56</sup> Exodus 4:25.

portion. Davi Walders "Tzipporah's Flint" attempts to answer some of these questions. In this poem, Walders describes the circumcision, ending with the statement "binding mother and son in covenant."<sup>57</sup> Instead of the covenant of the fathers, stretching from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, this poem speaks of a new covenant: between mother and son. The poem, therefore, focuses directly upon a passage, and elements of that passage that may often be ignored. To foster conversation about this unusual piece and to possibly explore some of the questions surrounding it, this poem can serve as an alternative haftarah.

## Chapter 2: Va'era

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<sup>57</sup> Davi Walders, "Tzipporah's Flint" All the Women Followed Her: A Collection of Writings on Miriam the Prophet and the Women of Exodus (California: Rikudei Miriam Press, 2001) 110.



In Va'era, verbal and thematic similarities link the Torah and haftarah portions. The Torah portion consists of the passages Exodus 6:2-9:35, while the haftarah portion consists of Ezekiel 28:25-29:21. One prominent verbal connection is inclusion of a description of the Nile and her channels. First of all, as Ezekiel describes Pharaoh's haughtiness, he quotes Pharaoh with the words, *Li Y'ori, V'ani asitini*. "My Nile (*y'ori*) is my own; I made it for myself."<sup>58</sup> In the following verses, Ezekiel returns to this word several times, describing how God will punish Pharaoh, by pulling him up out of the water, just as God would pull a sea monster from the depths.<sup>59</sup> In Exodus 7:19, God provides Moses with instructions on how to approach Pharaoh. God tells him that Aaron will turn the waters of the Nile into blood. Specifically, the text reads, "'Say to Aaron: Take your rod and hold out your arm over the waters of Egypt— its rivers, its canals, its ponds, all its bodies of water— that they might turn to blood."<sup>60</sup> In this verse, the word *y'orahem* refers to the canals of the waters of the Nile. This word is the same that Ezekiel used repetitively in the haftarah passage. Therefore, the shared root links the two passages verbally.

Additional shared language appears at the beginning of both passages. Ezekiel foretells an ingathering of the people of Israel, and he says, "...they shall settle on their own, soil, which I gave to My servant Jacob."<sup>61</sup> In this first example, Ezekiel mentions Jacob alone. The Anchor Bible explains the reason for the inclusion of Jacob without the additional patriarchs. Unlike Abraham and Isaac, who each had a son excluded from the inheritance of the land, all of Jacobs' sons inherit. In addition, God only promises Jacob

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<sup>58</sup> Ezekiel 29:3.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 29:4-5.

<sup>60</sup> Exodus 7:19.

<sup>61</sup> Ezekiel 28:25.

“heritage without limits.”” As it says in Genesis 28:14, “you shall burst forth westward and eastward, and northward and southward.”<sup>62</sup> The biblical passage similarly recalls God’s promise to Jacob. However, in the latter instance, God also refers to Abraham and Isaac. “I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession.”<sup>63</sup> The two passages echo each other. In both examples, God recalls the covenant with the patriarchs, connecting the people of Israel with their forefathers and with their inheritance. Though the names mentioned differ, the two passages are still related through the notion of the patriarchs, or patriarch, as a link to the land of Israel.

An additional verbal similarity between the texts is the word *shefatim*. In Ezekiel 28:26, God threatens to punish the nations among which the Israelites have been dispersed. God says that the Israelites will live in security, “...when I have meted out punishment (*shefatim*) to all those about them who despise them.”<sup>64</sup> Similarly, as God promises redemption in the Torah portion to the Israelites in Egypt, God also assures the people that there will be punishment. God says, “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment (*uvishfatim*).”<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, in Ezekiel 29:4, God describes the Egyptians’ punishment. God says, “I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish (*dagat*) of your channels cling to your scales.”<sup>66</sup> Within God’s explanation of the punishment, he mentions the fish that swim in the channels of the Nile. Similarly, in Exodus 7:18, God will turn the waters of the Nile

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<sup>62</sup> Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., 1997) 595.

<sup>63</sup> Exodus 6:8.

<sup>64</sup> Ezekiel 28:26.

<sup>65</sup> Exodus 6:6.

<sup>66</sup> Ezekiel 29:4.

into blood “and the fish (*hadagah*) in the Nile will die.”<sup>67</sup> The fish of the Nile, therefore, become a part of God’s plan.

A final shared statement connects the two passages both verbally and thematically. An important phrase appears several times within the two passages. *V’yidatem ki Ani Adonai Eloha’chem*. “And you shall know that I am the Eternal your God.”<sup>68</sup> The texts both use this phrase repetitively. But, there is an additional connection as well. In different instances, in both texts, the “you” refers to a different group of people. The first of these groups is the people of Israel. As Ezekiel describes the return of the Israelites to the land of Israel, he proclaims, “And they shall know that I the Eternal am their God.”<sup>69</sup> Moshe Greenberg emphasizes that the subject of this clause is ambiguous. It is not clear if Ezekiel is referring to the nations, who will view the return of the people of Israel and then know God. Or, if he refers to the people of Israel who return to the land and then know God. He highlights that the phrase “their God” conveys that Israel is the likely subject.<sup>70</sup> The Jewish Study Bible accepts this opinion.<sup>71</sup> But, Israel is not the only subject of this statement in the remainder of the two passages. For instance, in Ezekiel 29:16, the prophet declares, “Never again shall they be the trust of the House of Israel, recalling its guilt in having turned to them. And they shall know that I am the Eternal God.” This passage does not refer to the Israelites, as one might suspect. Instead, “the oracle ends with the self-identification formula, but it is applied to Egypt

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<sup>67</sup> Exodus 7:18.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 6:7.

<sup>69</sup> Ezekiel 28:26.

<sup>70</sup> Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., 1997) 595.

<sup>71</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 1097.

rather than Israel.”<sup>72</sup> Similarly, in Exodus 7:5, God specifically tells Moses that “the Egyptians shall know that I am the Eternal.” These two passages are not only linked by this common phrase, but also by the similarity in the various subjects of the phrase.

Moreover, this phrase serves a unique purpose thematically in the haftarah and Torah portions. God punishes Egypt in both passages. This punishment, though, has an extremely specific purpose. In both cases, the punishment itself will lead to the Egyptian acknowledgement that the Eternal is God. For example, Ezekiel describes the exile of the Egyptians. He then assures the Egyptians that they will one-day return to their land. However, they will never possess the power that they once had. Instead, they will be a “lowly kingdom.” It is through this debasement, Ezekiel claims, that “they shall know that I am the Eternal God.”<sup>73</sup> Similarly, it is only after God brings the plagues upon the Egyptians that they will know the true God. “By this you shall know that I am the Eternal.’ See, I shall strike the water in the Nile with the rod that is in my hand, and it will be turned into blood.”<sup>74</sup> When they are punished, the Egyptians will know God. As Issachar Ya’akovson remarks, “through the punishment of the nations, the name of God will be made known in all his strength and might.”<sup>75</sup> This theme clearly links the two passages.

The theme of the punishment of the Egyptians provides additional similarities connecting the haftarah and Torah portions. In both cases, the punishment of the Egyptians comes as a punishment for the people, but also for the land. As Ezekiel prophesies, “I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 1099.

<sup>73</sup> Ezekiel 29:16.

<sup>74</sup> Exodus 7:17.

<sup>75</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya’akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 155.

the countries.”<sup>76</sup> The people are clearly an object of God’s punishment. As is true in the Exodus passage. As God sends the plague of hail, “through out the land of Egypt the hail struck down all that were in the open, both man and beast.”<sup>77</sup> What may be a less apparent connection is the commonality that the land suffers as well. In Ezekiel 29:8-9, the prophet speaks of God’s future actions: “I will bring a sword against you, and will cut off man and beast from you, so that the land of Egypt shall fall into desolation.”<sup>78</sup> The land of Egypt suffers, as the people themselves suffer. Moshe Greenberg emphasizes this reality by pointing out that the verb in verse eight is feminine. Therefore, God is “addressing ‘the land of Egypt.’”<sup>79</sup> Similarly, as the hail comes down upon the people and animals of Egypt in the Torah portion, it damages the land. “...the hail also struck down all the grasses of the field and shattered all the trees of the field.”<sup>80</sup> In the Ezekiel and Exodus passages, the punishment comes to both the people and the land of Egypt.

Though the punishments clearly connect the texts, Ya’akovson emphasizes one possible difference. In the case of the Ezekiel passage, Babylonia conquers and destroys Egypt. Nebuchadrezzar, the leader of the Babylonians, “shall carry off her wealth and take her spoil and seize her booty; and she shall be the recompense of his army.”<sup>81</sup> The Babylonians, thus, execute the punishment of the Egyptians. This appears to be contrary to the Torah portion. In that case, God clearly takes this role. God “will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that (God) may multiply (God’s) signs and marvels in the land of

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<sup>76</sup> Ezekiel 29:12.

<sup>77</sup> Exodus 9:25.

<sup>78</sup> Ezekiel 29:8-9.

<sup>79</sup> Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., 1997) 605.

<sup>80</sup> Exodus 9:25.

<sup>81</sup> Ezekiel 29:19.

Egypt.”<sup>82</sup> Yet, the Ezekiel text specifically addresses this possible misunderstanding.

After Ezekiel describes how the Babylonians will conquer Egypt, he includes God’s final message: “As the wage for which he labored for what they did for Me, I give him the land of Egypt—declares the Eternal God.”<sup>83</sup> Though God uses different means to punish, God is responsible for each of these punishments:

And with this, there it is, as if he has provides a moral lesson to all the generations and to all the nations: even though God’s methods of punishment are different, behold in all of them it is incumbent upon us to recognize that the hand of God is the one who performs justice in history.<sup>84</sup>

A seeming contrast between the two passages is, in fact, a connection that brings the two together. Though Egypt is punished in different ways, God is the force behind these punishments.

In addition to the similarities between the punishments of the Egyptians, the haftarah and Torah portions converge on the matter of Israel’s reward. In fact, some scholars claim that these two events are linked in both texts. As the Egyptians face their punishment, it is then that the Israelites receive their reward:

The parashah and haftarah...stand in typological relationship to one other—as an old and new judgement against Egypt. Just as the first occurrence came to pass with Israel’s liberation, so the new judgement against Egypt is marked by promises of the nation’s ingathering and the sprouting of its horn of victory.<sup>85</sup>

Certain commentators perceive a direct link between the punishment and the reward. For instance, D.J. Hertz claims that the humiliation of Egypt in the Ezekiel text will “open the way for Israel’s restoration.”<sup>86</sup> He points to the beginning of verse 29:21 to support his

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<sup>82</sup> Exodus 7:3.

<sup>83</sup> Ezekiel 29:20.

<sup>84</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya’akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 155.

<sup>85</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 92.

<sup>86</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 247.

theory. Ezekiel says in that verse, "on that day." Hertz believes, therefore, that the same day that Babylonia conquers Egypt, God will provide the people of Israel with strength. Nevertheless, Moshe Greenberg questions this notion. He asks, "Is it that the Babylonian conquest of Egypt, predicted here, will herald Israel's restoration?"<sup>87</sup> Greenberg provides an ambivalent response. He claims that we cannot know if there is a direct relationship between the fall of Egypt and the rise of the people of Israel. Nevertheless, both events, the punishment of Egypt and the reward of Israel, appear in both of the passages. This similarity, in itself, links the two passages.

The similarities between the two texts, though, do not end here. The processes of redemption in the haftarah and the Torah follow a parallel course. As mentioned previously, both passages recall the connection between the people of Israel and their ancestors. Through this shared relation with the past, God renews the covenant with the people. "...they shall settle on their own soil, which I gave to My servant Jacob."<sup>88</sup> Similarly, God remarks in the Exodus text, "I also established My covenant with them (the forefathers)...I have remembered my covenant. Say, therefore, to the Israelite people: I am the Eternal, I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians..."<sup>89</sup> Through the allusion to the past covenant, God restores the covenant with present people of Israel in both the Ezekiel and Exodus passages.

Another component of redemption, which is common to the two texts, is the turn to the land that God has promised to the people. Ezekiel reminds the people that "...they

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<sup>87</sup> Moshe Greenberg, Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible) (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., 1997) 616.

<sup>88</sup> Ezekiel 28:25.

<sup>89</sup> Exodus 6:4-6.

shall settle on their own soil.”<sup>90</sup> God instructs Moses to reassure the people that God “...will bring you into the land...”<sup>91</sup> God, through messengers, reassures the people of their return to the land of Israel. Furthermore, in both texts, the people will not just go back to the land. In addition, they will inherit and possess the land. As Ezekiel says, “They shall build houses and plant vineyards...”<sup>92</sup> Moshe Greenberg affirms that “building houses and planting vineyards are typical acts of permanent settlement.”<sup>93</sup> Likewise, in Exodus 6:8, God says, “I will give it (the land) to you as a possession (Martha).”<sup>94</sup> The people will journey to the land and not only dwell upon it. Instead, they will inherit this land. In both passages, there is a sense of permanence to the promise of settlement in the land of Israel.

A similarity between the passages in terms of the path of redemption is the notion that Israel will be gathered from within the midst of the other nations. Ezekiel pointedly remarks that God will pick out the people of Israel from the places and people amongst which they have been dispersed.<sup>95</sup> One of the first steps toward redemption for the people of Israel is that God will remove them from the other nations and other peoples. God makes a similar promise to the Israelites in Egypt. God will “stretch out (God’s) hand over Egypt and bring out the Israelites from their midst.”<sup>96</sup> God delivers the people from other nations and returns them to their land. This common aspect of redemption pervades the haftarah and the Torah portions.

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<sup>90</sup> Ezekiel 28:25.

<sup>91</sup> Exodus 6:8.

<sup>92</sup> Ezekiel 28:26.

<sup>93</sup> Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., 1997) 596.

<sup>94</sup> Exodus 6:8.

<sup>95</sup> Ezekiel 28:26.

<sup>96</sup> Exodus 7:5.



Another key similarity between the texts is the description of Pharaoh's haughty manner. God conveys, through the mouth of Ezekiel, his anger at Pharaoh's overly confident opinion of himself. Ezekiel quotes Pharaoh as having said, "My Nile is my own; I made it for myself."<sup>97</sup> This statement alone conveys the immense pride of Pharaoh. He believes that he, not God, has created the most significant body of water in Egypt, the Nile. Yet, some commentators even take this understanding a step further. They claim that Pharaoh says, "I have made myself,"<sup>98</sup> not "I have made it (the Nile) for myself." As Fishbane acknowledges, this statement is "the more radical mythic assertion, laden with the hubris of self-creation."<sup>99</sup> Pharaoh is bold enough to claim that he created himself. Moshe Greenberg affirms that overt self-boastfulness is present in Pharaoh's statement. "What stands out in Pharaoh's boast is the self-reference in every word..."<sup>100</sup> Pharaoh adds the self-possessive "yud" or "nun-yud" to each of the words in his proclamation. He, therefore, further emphasizes his importance. However, it is also significant to note that Greenberg does not agree with the commentators who claim that Pharaoh believes that "I have made myself." Instead, he argues that the sentence means that Pharaoh "made the Nile for (his) benefit or glory,"<sup>101</sup> not that he specifically made himself. Again, in either case, Pharaoh's pride in himself is clearly expressed.

The description of Pharaoh in Exodus similarly conveys a prideful man. Pharaoh has enslaved the Israelites and continues to ignore the pleas of Moses and Aaron. God hardens Pharaoh's heart, so he refuses to release the people of Israel. Ya'akovson frames

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<sup>97</sup> Ezekiel 9:3.

<sup>98</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 89.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 89.

<sup>100</sup> Moshe Greenberg, Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible) (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., 1997) 602.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 602.

the events of the portion in a very specific way. He writes, "as if the acts of these miraculous deeds came only to educate Pharaoh...and for the subduing of an arrogant and boastful king to recognize the sovereignty of the creator of the world."<sup>102</sup>

Ya'akovson believes that the very reason for the plagues results from the haughtiness of Pharaoh. Because he is so confident in himself, God must bring the plagues to demonstrate to him who is the real "creator." Ezekiel describes a similar cause and effect relationship between the pride of Pharaoh and the punishment of Egypt. "I will bring a sword against you, and will cut off man and beast from you...And they shall know that I am the Eternal—because he boasted..."<sup>103</sup> As a result of Pharaoh's pride, a reality in both texts, God punishes the leader and his people.

A theme from the previous portion, Shemot, appears as well in these two texts. Though the leaders come to reassure the people of their redemption, the people do not believe them or trust in them. In the last verse of the Ezekiel passage, Ezekiel prophesies, "On that day I will endow the House of Israel with strength, and you shall be vindicated among them."<sup>104</sup> Literally, the second half of this proclamation translates as "and I will give to you an opening of the mouth." Hertz explains the meaning of this expression. He believes that only after God has redeemed the people and the words of the prophet have come true, will the people believe Ezekiel's "teaching and message."<sup>105</sup> Therefore, currently, the people continue to disregard what the prophet is saying. Only when they experience the redemption will they trust the prophet. In Exodus 6:9, the people are also incapable of hearing the words of Moses and believing what he will tell

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<sup>102</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 154.

<sup>103</sup> Ezekiel 29:8-9.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 29:21.

<sup>105</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 247.

them. "...they would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage."<sup>106</sup> Just as the people are reluctant to heed the words of Ezekiel, there is a reluctance amongst the Israelites in Egypt to listen to Moses and to believe him.

Finally, an allusion in the Ezekiel passage links this text with later chapters in the book of Exodus. As Ezekiel describes the punishment of Egypt, he warns that their exile will last for forty years. During this time, the land of Egypt will be desolate.<sup>107</sup> The "forty years" that the Egyptians will face punishment is reminiscent of the forty years that the Israelites will wander in the desert. As Fishbane acknowledges, forty years is "a typological number; it is well-known in biblical literature as a comprehensive period of time, perhaps two generations."<sup>108</sup> Though the forty years of Israelite wandering is not a component of this Torah portion, the Ezekiel reference seems to echo the upcoming experience of the Israelites.

Despite the many similarities between these two texts, there are some differences as well. First of all, the reason for Egypt's punishment varies from one text to the other. In the Ezekiel passage, Egypt is punished for its inconsistency as an ally to the people of Israel. "When they grasped you with the hand, you would splinter, and would all their shoulders. And when they leaned on you, you would break, and make all their loins unsteady."<sup>109</sup> Egypt has not been there for Israel when Israel relied on her. In contrast, in the Exodus passage, the reason for the punishment of Egypt is its enslavement of the Israelites. As God tells Moses, "I have now heard the moaning of the Israelites because they Egyptians are holding them in bondage...I will redeem you (Israelites) through an

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<sup>106</sup> Exodus 6:9.

<sup>107</sup> Ezekiel 29:12-13.

<sup>108</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 91.

<sup>109</sup> Ezekiel 29:7.

outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements."<sup>110</sup> Following the Egyptian enslavement of the Israelites, God will bring the Israelites out of Egypt and will punish the Egyptians. The two portions, thereby, diverge in their reasons for the punishment of Egypt and the Egyptians.

Another difference between the texts is the specific punishment that the Egyptians receive. Ezekiel describes the exile of the Egyptians from their land. They actually leave their homes, and God disperses them among other nations.<sup>111</sup> Ya'akovson confirms this notion. He writes, "in the haftarah, there are no changes which take place in the land itself. (Instead)...its king and its inhabitants are forced to leave—similar to a crocodile which is cast from the water to dry land, their homeland."<sup>112</sup> However, in Exodus, the Egyptians remain in their land. God does not disperse the people of Egypt through out other lands. Though God does punish them, God does not exile them.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, the actual punishments of the Egyptians differ from one text to another.

Though these differences do exist, I believe that the similarities are much more significant. Egypt is punished in both passages. That the exact reasons for these punishments and that the form of the punishments differ, I would argue, is less important. The passages relate because they describe a point in history when Egypt is suffering for her actions. Every specific point of the text cannot overlap. There will always be some differences. And in this case, these differences do not outweigh the similarities. The verbal connections, the punishment of the Egyptians and the land of Egypt, the knowledge of God, Israel's reward, and the punishment of Pharaoh's prideful behavior

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<sup>110</sup> Exodus 6:5-6.

<sup>111</sup> Ezekiel 29:12.

<sup>112</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 154.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 154.

clearly and meaningfully link the Ezekiel passage to the Exodus text. Therefore, reading these two passages together, as the haftarah and Torah, is both relevant and poignant.

Nevertheless, a modern reader may struggle with the harsh punishments that God brings upon the Egyptians. How can God behave this way to God's own creations? The Egyptians are human beings, like the Israelites, why should they suffer? In this situation, an alternative haftarah would not solve the problematic specificities of the reading. Since the Torah portion addresses these same themes, mainly punishment of the Egyptians for their actions, a change in the haftarah portion would not alter the presence of these issues in the Torah. As a result, the current haftarah portion is a significant complement to the given Torah portion, even if both texts propagate a notion of God and a notion of punishment that may not coincide with the beliefs of a modern Jew.

Yet, it may be worthwhile to propose modern texts, if congregations would prefer an alternative. If a congregation were to read the beginning of Va'era, Exodus 6:2-13, a possible alternative haftarah would be "Signs, Wonders and Faith: Or Did the Plagues Fail?" in *Creating Lively Passover Seders*. In the Exodus text, God clearly states the purpose of the plagues. The result of the plagues and the redemption is that, as the Divine states, "And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the Eternal, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians."<sup>114</sup> God explains that after the Divine has performed the plagues, the Israelites will know that this God is their God. But, does this prophecy come to pass? The essay in *Creating Lively Passover Seders* addresses this very question. Do humans build relationships with God through the wonders that God performs? Or, is there a more appealing and realistic bridge between the Israelites and the divine? And, could God be

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<sup>114</sup> Exodus 6:7.

“more interested in punishing the Egyptians and humiliating their gods than in using the plagues to teach anyone anything?”<sup>115</sup> If so, how do we relate to this image of God?

David Arnow’s text raises several significant questions about this portion. Since the Torah and haftarah portions do address topics that may be difficult for a modern audience to comprehend, reading this article allows for those individuals to directly address some of these issues. Hopefully, the article will also produce further conversations.

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<sup>115</sup> David Arnow, Creating Lively Passover Seders: An Interactive Sourcebook of Tales, Texts & Activities (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004), 196

### Chapter 3: Bo

There are fewer verbal connections between the haftarah, Jeremiah 46:13-28, and the Torah portion, Bo, Exodus 10:1-13:16, than with past portions. However, two clear similarities do bring meaning to the joint reading of these texts. In Jeremiah 46:23, the prophet warns the Egyptians of an imminent threat. He explains that the enemy will attack and conquer Egypt. Within this description, Jeremiah says, "They shall cut down her forest...though it cannot be measured; for they are more numerous than the locusts, and cannot be counted."<sup>116</sup> The reference to locust, or *arbeh*, directly relates to the plague of locusts, which occurs in the Torah portion. In the previous case, God sends the enemy, compared in number to locusts, to defeat Egypt. In the Exodus text, God sends the locusts as a plague to punish Pharaoh and to free the Israelite slaves. "...I will bring locusts on your territory. They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land..."<sup>117</sup> As Michael Fishbane writes, "The plague of locusts (*arbeh*) described in the parashah is also echoed in Jeremiah's prophecy..."<sup>118</sup>

Another verbal similarity is the inclusion of forms of the word *bo*. Jeremiah tells the people of Egypt that an enemy from the north *ba*, "is coming."<sup>119</sup> Some commentators believe that a play on words within this verse draws attention to the *ba*. In 46:20, Jeremiah says, *keretz m'tzafon bah vah*. In the Septuagint, the first *ba* comes from the root bet, alef, hay. The *va*, in contrast, is a prepositional phrase.<sup>120</sup> However, as Gunther Plaut observes, "Others understand the repetition to be purposeful, as an

<sup>116</sup> Jeremiah 46:23.

<sup>117</sup> Exodus 10:4-5.

<sup>118</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 97.

<sup>119</sup> Jeremiah 46:20.

<sup>120</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1996) 143.

emphasis..."<sup>121</sup> In either case, the similarities in sounds at the end of this verse, clearly draw attention to the word *ba*. In Exodus 10:1, the first verse of the Torah portion, God instructs Moses to *bo*, or to go, to Pharaoh. Just as the northern enemy of Egypt is coming to the Egyptians, Moses "came" to Pharaoh. "From this perspective, Nebuchadnezzar's 'coming' in judgement against Pharaoh...answers Moses' ancient 'coming.'"<sup>122</sup> The verb *bo* clearly connects the two texts. Therefore, though the verbal similarities between these two portions are not as abundant as in previous portions, these similarities are certainly significant connections between the haftarah and the Torah.

As in the haftarah and Torah portions for Va'era, the theme of the punishment of Egypt continues in the haftarah and Torah portions for Bo. Jeremiah's warnings seem to echo the warnings of Ezekiel. He says "Equip yourselves for exile, Fair Egypt, you who dwell secure!"<sup>123</sup> Egypt's punishment is inevitable. Likewise, in the Exodus passage, the plagues against the Egyptians continue. They struggle with locusts, darkness, and the death of the first born. "And Pharaoh arose in the night, with all his courtiers and all the Egyptians—because there was a loud cry in Egypt; for there was no house where there was not someone dead."<sup>124</sup> Thus, the suffering in the haftarah is echoed in the Torah portion. In both examples, the Egyptians lose their safety and comfort and face tragedy.

Another similarity with Va'era is the emphasis upon the separation between the people of Israel and the remaining nations. Jeremiah distinguishes the fate of the Israelites from that of the Egyptians and from that of the people of other nations. After Jeremiah has issued his warning concerning the destruction of Egypt, he repeats two

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. 148.

<sup>122</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 97.

<sup>123</sup> Jeremiah 46:19.

<sup>124</sup> Exodus 12:30.



times, "V'ata, al tirah, avdi Ya'akov," "But you, have no fear, My servant of Jacob."<sup>125</sup> Egypt will suffer; however, the people of Israel will be safe. Though God will still punish the Israelites, God reminds them that they should not be afraid. Jeremiah also differentiates between Israel and the nations. "I will make an end of all the nations among which I have banished you. But I will not make an end to you."<sup>126</sup> The Israelites are not like the Egyptians or the nations of the world. Though they too will be punished, they will not be fully destroyed. Similarly, through out the Exodus passage, the text makes a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The Egyptians face the plagues of darkness, but the Israelites still have light.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, as God smites the first born of the Egyptians, God does not smite the first born of the Israelites. "For when the Eternal goes through to smite the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the lintel and the two door posts, and the Eternal will pass over the door and not let the Destroyer enter and smite your home."<sup>128</sup> In Exodus, God separates the fate of the Israelites from the fate of the Egyptians, as God distinguishes the fate of the Israel from Egypt and the rest of the nations in the Jeremiah text.

Another similarity between the haftarah and Torah portions is the people's complaining against Pharaoh. In Jeremiah 46:16-17, the prophet describes how the mercenaries or foreign traders<sup>129</sup> wish to flee Egypt to escape punishment. They blame Pharaoh, specifically, for the fate that has fallen upon Egypt. As Jeremiah recounts, "There they called Pharaoh king of Egypt: 'Braggart who let the hour go by.'<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Jeremiah 46:27, 28.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. 46:28.

<sup>127</sup> Exodus 10:23.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 12:23.

<sup>129</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 95.

<sup>130</sup> Jeremiah 46:17.

Fishbane claims that the word, *shaon*, translated here as “braggart,” can be translated in several other ways. For instance, the word may mean uproar, commotion, loudmouth, desolation, or destruction.<sup>131</sup> Hertz provides another translation for this word. He explains that the word may mean that “Pharaoh’s name is but an empty noise; the time when he might have saved himself and them is past.”<sup>132</sup> With each of these translations, it is clear that the people blame Pharaoh for missing the opportunity to save them. He “let the hour go by,” instead of acting on his and their behalf. Therefore, “...in the haftarah there is heard an undercurrent of rebellion, of despair, of an honest appraisal of the situation on the part of the servants and their entourage...”<sup>133</sup> The Egyptians express a similar frustration in the Exodus text. They complain that Pharaoh has not acted in time. They say, “How long shall this one be a snare to us? Let the men go to worship the Eternal their God! Are you not yet aware that Egypt is lost?”<sup>134</sup> There is a sense in both the haftarah and the Torah portions that the people know more than Pharaoh. They believe that Pharaoh has missed his opportunity or has not accepted his inevitable defeat. Therefore, they speak out against him, and there is an undercurrent of rebellion.

Additionally, in the haftarah and Torah portions, the noisiness and confusion of Pharaoh and the Egyptians contrasts with the quiet and security of the Israelites. As mentioned above, the name by which the foreign traders and mercenaries describe Pharaoh has many possible translations. Several of these revolve around the notion of noise. Pharaoh is a “loudmouth” or “a big tumult.”<sup>135</sup> Fishbane emphasizes that this

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<sup>131</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 95.

<sup>132</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 263.

<sup>133</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 161.

<sup>134</sup> Exodus 10:7.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 95.

sense of noise, or commotion, is in direct contrast to a later verse. In Jeremiah 46:27, the prophet tells the Israelites that you “shall have clam and quiet...”<sup>136</sup> The words *sheket* and *sha'an* in this verse differ from the word *shaon* in verse 17. Noise and chaos engulf Pharaoh and Egypt, while serenity and silence envelop the Israelites.<sup>137</sup> The juxtaposition between uproar and quiet exists in the Torah portion as well. When God smites the first born of the Egyptians, “...there shall be a loud cry in all the land of Egypt, such as never been or will ever be again; but not a dog shall snarl at any of the Israelites, at man or beast...”<sup>138</sup> Once again, the noise surrounding the Egyptians contrasts with the peacefulness that God bestows upon Israel. As a result, the texts further emphasize here the distinction between the people of Egypt and the people of Israel.

A final connection between the haftarah and Torah portion is in the element of promise and fulfillment. In Exodus 12:12, God warns that he will not only destroy the first born of the Egyptians. In addition, God “will mete out punishments to all the gods of Egypt.”<sup>139</sup> In Jeremiah 46:25, God proclaims, “I will inflict punishment on Amon of No and on Pharaoh—on Egypt, her gods, and her kings...”<sup>140</sup> Amon is the imperial god of Egypt<sup>141</sup> and the god of the city, No. At the time that Jeremiah prophesied, the Egyptians viewed Amon highly.<sup>142</sup> God’s proclamation predicts the punishment of Amon and the gods of Egypt. “Thus God will wreak judgement upon the gods of Egypt,

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<sup>136</sup> Jeremiah 46:27.

<sup>137</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 95.

<sup>138</sup> Exodus 11:6-7.

<sup>139</sup> Exodus 12:12.

<sup>140</sup> Jeremiah 46:25.

<sup>141</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 96.

<sup>142</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1996) 144.

as He pronounced long ago.”<sup>143</sup> God’s promise in Exodus 12:12 is fulfilled in Jeremiah 46:25. As a result, the two portions are inherently linked.

In sum, the haftarah and Torah portions are related verbally and thematically through the description of the punishment of Egypt, the distinction between Israel and the nations, the complaints directed towards Pharaoh, and the destruction of Egyptian gods, which is foretold in one passage and fulfilled in the other. Though these are strong similarities between these two texts, I believe that other texts may be a better fit for this Torah portion. Through the exploration of additional texts, I will determine additional connections and reevaluate this assessment.

In examining the Torah and haftarah portions for the triennial cycle, the beginning of Bo, Exodus 10:1-12:12 is paired with 1 Samuel 6:6-14. In the Samuel text, the Philistines seek the assistance of the Israelite priests, surrounding matters of the Ark of the Covenant. The Philistines, in the previous chapter, have defeated the Israelites in war and have captured the Ark. However, once they have observed how God punishes the people in possession of the Ark, the Philistines desperately long to return it. For this reason, they turn to the priests for guidance. The haftarah creates a parallel situation, therefore, with the Exodus text: a foreign country possesses what God wants in the land of Israel. In fact, the priests compare the Philistines to the Egyptians. They say, “Don’t harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened (*ticabdu*) their hearts. As you know, when He made a mockery of them, they had to let Israel go, and they departed.”<sup>144</sup> The same Hebrew verb, *kaved*, describes Pharaoh’s heart in the Exodus

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<sup>143</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarot* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 97.

<sup>144</sup> 1 Samuel 6:6.

story. "Go to Pharaoh. For I have hardened (*hikbad'ti*) his heart..."<sup>145</sup> Moreover, in this same verse from Samuel, the priests recall how the Egyptians were embarrassed, or mocked by Pharaoh. In Exodus 10:7, the Egyptians express this sense of shame. "Pharaoh's courtiers said to him, 'How long shall this one be a snare to us? Let the men go to worship the Eternal..."<sup>146</sup> Finally, the Samuel passage describes the beginning of the journey of the tabernacle to its rightful place. In Exodus, immediately following the occurrences of this triennial portion, the Israelites begin their journey to their rightful place, the land of Israel.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, a strong parallel can connect the texts of Samuel and Exodus.

Another alternative to the traditional haftarah could be Ezra 6:16-22. For this text to resonate with the Exodus text, Exodus 12:14-28 could be read. In this chapter of Ezra, the Israelites return from the first exile and celebrate this return. Not only do they offer sacrifices to dedicate the new Temple, but they also "organized the priests and the levites for the worship of God in Jerusalem, according to the instructions found in the book of Moses."<sup>148</sup> The continuing verses parallel the instructions in the Exodus text. The people celebrate Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, as God had instructed in Exodus 12:14. The priests and levites "offered the Passover sacrifice...It was eaten by all the people of Israel who had returned from exile..."<sup>149</sup> The priests obey the exact words of God, when God proclaimed, "And when you enter the land that the Eternal will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this right...'it is the Passover sacrifice to the

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<sup>145</sup> Exodus 10:1.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. 10:7.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 12:31.

<sup>148</sup> Ezra 6:18.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. 6:20-21.

Eternal...<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, the people in the time of Ezra celebrate the “festival of Matzot for seven days,”<sup>151</sup> as Moses had instructed: “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.”<sup>152</sup> Therefore, in the Ezra text, the Israelites fulfill the promise that they made in the land of Egypt: They will “observe this as an institution for all time.”<sup>153</sup>

Several modern texts could also serve as important alternatives. In his book, *Creating Lively Passover Seders*, David Arnow addresses the disturbing question: Why did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? In Exodus 10:1-20, the text presents a challenge to the modern audience. God hardens Pharaoh’s heart<sup>154</sup> and then punishes both Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Why would God deliberately make Pharaoh say “no” to Moses request, if it would directly lead to punishment for him and for his people. David Arnow compiles six commentators’ responses to this very issue. The authors of Exodus Rabbah point out that God has warned Pharaoh, on several occasions. Since Pharaoh does not take these opportunities to repent, God punishes him. A modern scholar, Nehama Leibowitz, provides a very different approach. She writes, “The more he (Pharaoh) persists in the first path of his choosing, shall we say, the evil path, the harder will it become for him to revert to the good path...”<sup>155</sup> With this interplay of commentaries, modern readers could directly address some of the challenging questions that this portion may pose.

If a congregation wanted to focus upon a later part of this Torah portion, the departure from Egypt, in Exodus 12:29-51, Marge Piercy’s poem “Maggid” provides a meaningful new reading of this text. Piercy describes the fears, the challenges, and the

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<sup>150</sup> Exodus 12:25-27.

<sup>151</sup> Ezra 6:22.

<sup>152</sup> Exodus 12:15.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 12:24.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 10:1, 10:20.

<sup>155</sup> David Arnow *Creating Lively Passover Seders: A Source Book of Engaging Tales, Texts and Activities* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004) 77-78.

emotions surrounding leaving one's home. She writes, "The courage to let go of the door, the handle. The courage to shed the familiar walls..."<sup>156</sup> Piercy asks the questions, What did it mean for the Israelites to leave Egypt? How difficult is it to leave behind your home, even if your home is a place of slavery or isolation? Furthermore, Piercy compares the departure from Egypt to the constant departure of different Jews in different times and places from their homes. "So they walked out of Egypt. So they bribed their way out of Russia under loads of straw."<sup>157</sup> Through Piercy's poem, the Exodus from Egypt becomes a universal tale of leaving behind what was once one's home.

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<sup>156</sup> Marge Piercy "Maggid" Telling and Remembering ed. Steven Rubin (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997) 300.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 300-301.

## Chapter 4: Beshalach

The Torah portion, Beshalach, Exodus 13:17-17:16, shares many similarities with the haftarah portion, Judges 4:4-5:31. The links between the two portions are both verbal and thematic. One key verbal connection is the appearance of the word *neviah*, or prophetess, in the texts of both the haftarah and the Torah. The haftarah portion begins with the words, "Deborah, wife of Lappidoth, was a prophetess; she led Israel at that time."<sup>158</sup> Deborah is a leader of the community, and in this case, a prophetess. According to Rabbinic tradition, there are only seven prophetesses listed in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, it is significant that the Torah portion includes the mention of a prophetess as well. In Exodus 15:20, the people of Israel have escaped through the waters of the Red Sea. "Then Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels."<sup>160</sup> Both Deborah and Miriam hold the title of prophetess. In addition, though they are described as leaders of the community, both are also described in connection with their male relatives. Therefore, the two portions are primarily linked by the mention of the word, "prophetess."

Additionally, in both text, the word *az* or then, appears prominently. In Judges 5, the author includes the word *az* five times within several verses. "Then was there a fighter in their gates..." "Then did the people of the Eternal..." "Then was the remnant made victor over the mighty..."<sup>161</sup> The word appears again in verses 19 and 22 and its very use is significant to the meaning of the text. "Its appearance indicates various stages

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<sup>158</sup> Judges 4:4.

<sup>159</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 101.

<sup>160</sup> Exodus 15:20.

<sup>161</sup> Judges 5:8, 11, 13.



in the course of the war: danger, gathering together, arrival at the battlefield, war, retreat.”<sup>162</sup> In Exodus 15:1, *az* marks the beginning of the chapter and the beginning of Moses’ song. “Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Eternal.”<sup>163</sup> The Israelites have survived their escape from Egypt and now can celebrate. The *az* marks this transition. As a result, *az* connects one text to the other.

In both portions, the leaders of the Israelite community sing a song thanking God for their victories. In each instance, the leader begins the song with the words, *ashirah l’Adonai*, “I will sing to the Eternal.” In Judges, Deborah repeats the word “sing,” using two synonyms, the verb *shir* and the verb *zamir*. “I will sing, will sing to the Eternal.”<sup>164</sup> Moses, says “sing” only once, using the verb *shir*. “I will sing to the Eternal.”<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, the appearance of “sing to the Eternal” in the texts creates a common thread between them.

As the Torah portion Beshalach concludes, the author describes the battle between the Israelites and Amalek. When Moses raises his hands, the Israelites are victorious. When he drops them, they are not. With the assistance of Aaron and Hur, Moses keeps his hands raised and the Israelites are successful in battle.<sup>166</sup> God then tells Moses that “the Eternal will be at war with Amalek through out the ages.”<sup>167</sup> Though the Israelites have defeated Amalek in this battle, God and God’s people will always be at war with this leader. It is interesting, therefore, that the haftarah portion refers to the name of

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<sup>162</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, The Jewish Study Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 520.

<sup>163</sup> Exodus 15:1.

<sup>164</sup> Judges 5:3.

<sup>165</sup> Exodus 15:1.

<sup>166</sup> Exodus 17:8-13.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 17:16.

Amalek. "From Ephraim came they whose roots are in Amalek."<sup>168</sup> Michael Fishbane explains that the interpretation of this statement is not clear. He refers to the Septuagint, which translates the word *amalek* as valley, an indication that their Hebrew text read *emek*, which differs from *amalek* by one Hebrew letter. But, he also includes an explanation popular in the Middle Ages. In that time period, some would "interpret the passage as referring to heroes who stemmed from Ephraim and fought against Amalek (e.g., Joshua and Saul)."<sup>169</sup> This explanation would clearly link the texts of the haftarah and Torah.

Several other statements appear in both the haftarah and the Torah portions. One example is the expression *lefi herev*, with the sword or by the sword. In Judges, the Israelites defeat Sisera and his army. They fall "by the sword."<sup>170</sup> In Exodus, the Israelites defeat Amalek and his army "with the sword."<sup>171</sup> Another expression appearing in both texts is *lo nishar ad ehad*, not one was left. In Judges, this statement refers to the fallen soldiers of Sisera's army.<sup>172</sup> In Exodus, the text describes how of all of Pharaoh's army "not one of them remained."<sup>173</sup> A final verbal link is the expression *va'yahom*, confounded. In Judges, the text reads "...and the Eternal confounded Sisera and all his chariots and army."<sup>174</sup> In Exodus, God "confounded" the Egyptian army as they attempt to cross the sea.<sup>175</sup> In fact, Robert G. Boling argues that the accounts of the victories in Judges and in Exodus are so similar that that "must be attributed to the same author or

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<sup>168</sup> Judges 5:14.

<sup>169</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 104.

<sup>170</sup> Judges 4:16.

<sup>171</sup> Exodus 17:13.

<sup>172</sup> Judges 4:16.

<sup>173</sup> Exodus 14:28.

<sup>174</sup> Judges 4:15.

<sup>175</sup> Exodus 14:24.

editor.”<sup>176</sup> Evidently, there are many key verbal similarities between the texts of the haftarah and the Torah.

Thematic similarities also link the two portions. In the texts of Judges and Exodus, the people of Israel are facing a threat. In the end, it is only God who can save them from the enemy. “There is an imminent danger to the people by way of an enemy that strove to destroy them, and only the help of the creator of the world was their bulwark.”<sup>177</sup> In Judges, the Israelites must prepare themselves for war against the mighty army of Sisera. In Exodus, the Israelites must escape from the Egyptians and then must battle Amalek. As Deborah prepares Barak for the encounter with Sisera, she tells him, “Up! This is the day on which the Eternal will deliver Sisera into your hands: the Eternal is marching before you.”<sup>178</sup> Even before the Israelites venture into battle, Deborah assures them that God will save them. *The Jewish Study Bible*, in fact, claims that “these words of Deborah indicate the Eternal’s direct participation in the battle, as the leader going at the head of the army.”<sup>179</sup> God is responsible for the victory of the Israelites. The text further emphasizes God’s role once the Israelites are victorious. “On that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites.”<sup>180</sup> The Israelite army defeats King Jabin’s army led by Sisera. Yet, the text makes clear that it is only due to God’s support that this outcome occurs. Similarly, there is no question that it is God who saves the Israelites in Exodus. After the defeat of the Egyptians, the text explains “Thus the Eternal delivered Israel that day from the Egyptians.”<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, as the

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<sup>176</sup> Robert G. Boling, *Judges (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 1975) 97.

<sup>177</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya’akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 169.

<sup>178</sup> Judges 4:14.

<sup>179</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 518.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. 519.

<sup>181</sup> Exodus 14:30.

Israelites face Amalek's army, Moses tells Joshua that "'I will station myself on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in my hand.'" <sup>182</sup> It is this rod that leads to the Israelite victory for when Moses raises the rod, the Israelites prevail. Evidently the haftarah and Torah describe two instances of "divine salvation in history." <sup>183</sup>

Moreover, the texts tell of these victories in both prose and poetry. In Judges 4:4-23, the author describes the Israelites defeat of Sisera's army and the murder of Sisera by Jael. Then, in Judges 5:1-31, the author describes these same events, with some alterations, in poetic form. Interestingly, the Torah portion follows a similar pattern. In Exodus 13:17-14:31, the text tells of the Israelite escape from Egypt, their crossing of the Sea of Reeds, and God's drowning of the Egyptians. In Exodus 15:1-18, Moses recounts the events in a song. Miriam contributes her own song describing what had happened, though in a shorter form, in Exodus 15:21. Both texts use two different forms of writing to tell the story of the success of the Israelites. Moreover, both poetic accounts of the events, in Judges and in Exodus, are part of a group of ten songs, "which span the sacred history of Israel," according to the rabbis. <sup>184</sup>

There are several different reasons that commentators provide to explain why Deborah sings her song. Hertz believes that her song is "the war-song which roused the clans to battle." <sup>185</sup> However, Robert Boling gives a different explanation. He writes, "'The reference is not to the present song but to that customarily chanted by women folk when the warriors return with the loot.'" <sup>186</sup> If Boling's explanation is true, this portion of

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid. 17:9.

<sup>183</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 106.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. 104.

<sup>185</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 284.

<sup>186</sup> Robert G. Boling, *Judges (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 1975) 111.

the text may more strongly connect to Miriam's song. In that case, both texts would convey "an image of women as singers of war songs."<sup>187</sup> Yet, it is also important to note that with the current texts, Deborah's song is a central component of the telling, but Miriam's is not. Moses' song consists of eighteen verses, while Miriam's is only one. Women's songs, therefore, are present in both texts. Nevertheless, the two texts treat these songs very differently.

The two passages also coincide in their descriptions of the defeat of the Israelite's enemies. In the Judges text, the Israelites overthrow Sisera's army. There is no question of their success, since the text describes this victory with vivid imagery. "The torrent Kishon swept them away. The raging torrent, the torrent Kishon."<sup>188</sup> The describes the overwhelming defeat of Sisera's army with the metaphor of waters, which sweep them away. This imagery is particularly relevant in comparison to the defeat of the Egyptians in Exodus. "Moses held out his arm over the sea...the Egyptians fled its approach. But, the Eternal hurled the Egyptians into the sea. The waters turned back and covered the chariots and the horsemen..."<sup>189</sup> The Egyptians are drowned in the waters of the Sea of Reeds. The imagery in Judges is a metaphor, while Exodus describes and event more literally. Nevertheless, one text seems to be suggestive of the other.

Another similarity between the two texts is the reference to Sinai. As Deborah begins her song, she alludes to the revelation at Mt. Sinai. She says:

O Eternal, when you came forth from Seir, advance from the country of Edom, the earth trembled; the heavens dripped. The clouds dripped water, the mountains quaked; Before the Eternal, Him of Sinai. Before the Eternal, God of Israel.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, Women's Bible Commentary (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 1998) 35.

<sup>188</sup> Judges 5:21.

<sup>189</sup> Exodus 14:27-28.

<sup>190</sup> Judges 5:4-5.

Several commentators understand this excerpt as a reference to the revelation at Mt. Sinai. For instance, "the Targum perceived an allusion here to Sinai and the giving of the Torah. Psalm 68 also sings a song of historical praise that refers to the event of Sinai in language similar to Judges 5:4-4."<sup>191</sup> With this interpretation, the passage in Exodus seems to connect. In Exodus 16:1, "...the whole Israelite community came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai..."<sup>192</sup> As the Israelites move about in the desert, they come to a place that is near the area of Sinai. This reference seems to foreshadow the next Torah portion, in which God gives the Torah to the Israelites. However, this connection does seem to be weaker than other similarities between the two texts. Though both portions may allude to the revelation at Sinai, they may not. In fact, Boling argues that the advancing of God from Seir to Edom is not a reference to Sinai at all, but an "affirmation that Yahweh and Israel conquered a large extent of Canaan..."<sup>193</sup>

A final connection between these passages is that both express hope of a future redemption. As Deborah's song concludes, the prophetess says, "So may all Your enemies perish, O Eternal! But may His friends be as the sun rising in might!"<sup>194</sup> Similarly, at the end of Moses' song, the leader says, "You (God) will bring them (God's people) and plant them in Your own mountain, the place You made to dwell in, O Eternal. The sanctuary, O Eternal, which Your hands established. The Eternal will reign

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<sup>191</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 103.

<sup>192</sup> Exodus 16:1.

<sup>193</sup> Robert G. Boling, Judges (Anchor Bible) (New York: Doubleday, 1975) 108.

<sup>194</sup> Judges 5:31.

for ever and ever!"<sup>195</sup> Evidently, the songs in both the haftarah and Torah portions conclude with a message of enduring divine kingship and Israelite security.

This haftarah directly addresses the song of a woman and the victory of the Israelites. But, it focuses less upon God's direct redemption of the people, an essential component of the Torah portion. Therefore, alternative haftarot may be more relevant to this specific aspect of the Torah portion.

Exodus 13:21-15:18 is a reading from the triennial cycle, paired with the haftarah portion, Isaiah 49:10-13. In this part of the Torah portion, the Israelites escape Egypt; cross the Red Sea, leaving the Egyptians behind them; and join Moses in a song of celebration. The haftarah affirms God's promise to the people that God will protect them. The redemption in Exodus is echoed in the words of the haftarah:

They shall not hunger or thirst, hot wind and sun shall not strike them; For He who loves them will lead them, He will guide them to springs of water. I will make all My mountains a road, and My highways shall be built up. Look! These are coming from afar, these from the north and the west, and these from the land of Sinim. Shout, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth! Break into shouting, O hills! For the Eternal has comforted His people, and has taken back His afflicted ones in love.<sup>196</sup>

God promises the Israelites that they will live in security. As God did at the crossing of the Red Sea, God will destroy all obstacles in their way, whether it is a sea or a mountain. God utilizes any natural object to insure the safety of the people. Furthermore, God will take "back His afflicted ones in love." God's vow emphasizes the universality of the crossing of the Red Sea. The event is not isolated in history, instead it is God's perpetual deliverance of the Israelites.

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<sup>195</sup> Exodus 15:17-18.

<sup>196</sup> Isaiah 49:10-13.

made Your glorious power march alongside Moses, dividing the waters before us.”<sup>202</sup>

The text frames the crossing as a universal event, one that occurs multiple times, not only at the Red Sea. Moreover, as the deliverance in Exodus returns the people to their God,<sup>203</sup> the later redemption described in Isaiah leads God’s “people to the glory of” God’s name.<sup>204</sup>

An additional text discussing this moment of redemption, is Joseph Albardani’s poem, “The Three Factions.” Albardani describes the different responses of the Israelites as they crossed the Red Sea. Despite God’s reassurances,<sup>205</sup> more than half of the people do not trust in God’s ability to save them and to improve their lives. “The first faction spoke up: ‘Let us drown in the seething waters...’ The second faction wanted them to go back to Egypt...”<sup>206</sup> Albardani creates a personal and individual description of the crossing. What would it be like to cross the sea? Could someone trust that s/he would ultimately be safe? What would be the reactions? What would be the fears? Hearing each group’s concerns, Moses responds, reassuring the people: “...’Stand firm and see the Eternal’s deliverance...but as sure as you see the Egyptians now, you will never see them again.’”<sup>207</sup> The final group wishes to fight the Egyptians, creating their own victory. To this group, God promises the people that he will fight for them and that they do not need to fight on their own.<sup>208</sup> Therefore, Albardani’s poem creates a more

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<sup>201</sup> Exodus 14:19.

<sup>202</sup> Joshua 63:12.

<sup>203</sup> Exodus 14:31.

<sup>204</sup> Joshua 63:14.

<sup>205</sup> Exodus 14:15-16.

<sup>206</sup> Joseph Albardani. “The Three Factions” *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (England: Penguin Books. 981). 259.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. 259.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. 259.



personal description of the crossing. Through his poem, one can explore possible human reactions to change and to redemption.

Finally, Janet Ruth Falmon's poem, "Miriam the Speechwriter" provides a new perspective on the events of the Torah portion. In her poem, Falmon describes Miriam's capacity to articulate that which the people think and feel. That ability is what distinguishes her work from the work of her brothers. "...it was Miriam who put words in the mouth, words that flowed like honey of bees...thick enough to spread through the crowd, sufficiently golden to reflect..."<sup>209</sup> Falmon acknowledges that though Miriam is known best for her dancing, "she was the one who gave voice...who translated God to People and moved them to reconsider and to tears..."<sup>210</sup> Commentators often question the extent of Miriam's role in the celebration following the deliverance. Falmon's poem provides a new perspective, placing Miriam as the mediator between God and the people.

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<sup>209</sup> Janet Ruth Falon. "Miriam the Speechwriter" All the Women Followed Her: A Collection of Writings on Miriam the Prophet and the Women of Exodus (California: Rikudei Miriam Press, 2001), 159.

## Chapter 5: Yitro

The Torah portion Yitro, Exodus 18:1-20:23, has many similarities with the haftarah portion Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6. As was the case with previous texts, the two portions are related by verbal similarities. For instance, in Isaiah 6:2-3, the prophet describes his vision of God and God's accompanying seraphim. The seraphim turn to each other and declare: *kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*. "Holy, holy, holy! The Eternal of Hosts! His presence fills all the earth!"<sup>211</sup> In this instance, the angels identify God as the Holy One. Ramban, though, suggests an additional understanding. He writes, "And you shall be a kingdom of my servants and a holy nation to cling to the holy God. As he said, (Leviticus 19:2), 'You shall be Holy for I, the Eternal, am holy.'"<sup>212</sup> By God's holiness, the people of Israel are also holy. The haftarah portion confirms this notion in Isaiah 6:13. As Isaiah describes the Israelite's punishment, he provides some hope for the people. He assures them that though merely a "stump" will remain of the Israelites, that stump "shall be a holy seed."<sup>213</sup> Even though many of the Israelites will act unjustly and face God's punishment, the righteous will remain. From them "a new nation will rise."<sup>214</sup>

As Isaiah describes the holiness of God and the people, so too does the Exodus text claim that the people are *kadosh*. God reminds Moses and wishes to remind the people of how God saved them from Egypt. If the people follow God's covenant, God assures them that they "shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed,

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 159.

<sup>211</sup> Isaiah 6:3.

<sup>212</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 184.

<sup>213</sup> Isaiah 6:13.

<sup>214</sup> W. Guther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1996) 171.

all the earth is Mine. But, you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."<sup>215</sup>

As in the Isaiah passage, the people are *kadosh*, or holy.

A key verbal link in both texts is the appearance of the word *ra'ah*, see. In the haftarah and Torah portions this verb appears several times. In Isaiah, the text begins with the description of how Isaiah *ra'ereh* God.<sup>216</sup> Then, in verse 6:5, he refers to this earlier moment of seeing God. In fact, he fears that he does not deserve this honor.<sup>217</sup> Thus, in the haftarah portion, *ra'ah* describes Isaiah's "seeing" of God. In the Torah portion, God restricts what the people can or cannot see. Thus, in Exodus 19:21, God tells Moses to "go down, warn the people not to break through to the Eternal to gaze (*lir'ot*), lest many of them perish."<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, though the people may not see God directly, they are able to witness the event. They "see" the thunder and then the smoke. And, when they see it, they fall back at stand at a distance.<sup>219</sup> The root, *ra'ah* plays a key role in the haftarah and Torah portions.

In addition, the two texts both use the word, *kna'faim*, wings. In Isaiah, the prophet describes the wings of the sepharim who surround God. Each one has six wings "two covering the face, two covering the body, and two to fly with."<sup>220</sup> This same word *kna'faim* appears in Exodus 19:4. God reminds the people that "I bore you on eagles' wings (*kanfei nesharim*) and brought you to Me."<sup>221</sup> The repetition of the Hebrew word *kna'faim* or *kanfei*, in the construct form, links one text to the other.

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<sup>215</sup> Exodus 19:5-6.

<sup>216</sup> Isaiah 6:1.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid 6:5.

<sup>218</sup> Exodus 19:21.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. 20:15.

<sup>220</sup> Isaiah 6:2.

<sup>221</sup> Exodus 19:4.

Another verbal similarity is the use of the word *ashen*, smoke. As the angels were declaring the holiness of God in Isaiah, "the foundations shook and the temple filled with smoke."<sup>222</sup> The scene is similar when the people gather at Mt. Sinai for the revelation. There too, the mountain "was all in smoke, for the Eternal had come down upon it in fire, the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently"<sup>223</sup> The text provides similar imagery in later verses, as well. Thus, Exodus 20:15 reads, "All the people witnessed the thunder and lightening, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking..."<sup>224</sup> In all three verses, one from Isaiah and two from Exodus, a form of the Hebrew word, *ashen*, smoke, appears. Moreover, though there is not a direct verb link in the Hebrew, the texts both describe trembling or shaking. As such, these verses connect both verbally and thematically.<sup>225</sup>

Indeed, there are numerous thematic similarities between the texts of the Torah and haftarah. One significant bridge is the encounter between the Divine and the human. In Isaiah, the prophet has a vision of God. God is "seated on a throne, high and exalted, wearing a robe whose train filled the temple."<sup>226</sup> As mentioned before, the seraphim surround God and praise God's holiness. Dr. J. H. Hertz argues that even though this encounter is a vision, it is still real. As he writes, "though the vision is seen with his inner eye, it is none the less actual. In the agitation of such a soul-experience, the pillars shake and the House becomes blurred before his physical eyes."<sup>227</sup> Exodus describes a similar encounter between God and humans. In this case, the event is communal instead

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<sup>222</sup> Isaiah 6:4.

<sup>223</sup> Exodus 19:18.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid 20:15.

<sup>225</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 114.

<sup>226</sup> Isaiah 6:1.

<sup>227</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 302.

of personal. The entire people of Israel come before God, not just one individual. "On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder, and lightening... and all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses led the people out of the camp toward God, and they took their places at the foot of the mountain."<sup>228</sup> God gives the Torah to the people at Mt. Sinai. As is true of Isaiah 6, the Exodus text describes a meeting of human and Divine.

In both texts, this encounter entails purification. In Isaiah 6:5, the prophet fearfully describes his own uncleanness and his own unworthiness. At this moment "One of the seraphim flew over to me with a live coal which he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it, saying: Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt is gone, your sin is wiped clean."<sup>229</sup> With a touch of coal to his lips, Isaiah is purified. Commentators explain this process. "God's holiness is, as it were, a 'devouring fire' of all impurity."<sup>230</sup> The coal from the altar brings purity. However, W. G. Plaut provides a different explanation. He writes that the coal is a metaphor: "God's challenge was like a burning coal."<sup>231</sup> Therefore, the burning coal is not just a means for purification, but a representation of the difficulty of the task that Isaiah now faces. In relation to the Torah portion, the previous explanation provides a stronger connection. As the Israelites prepare for the revelation at Mt. Sinai, Moses instructs them "to stay pure... 'be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.'"<sup>232</sup> Prior to their meeting with God, the people prepare themselves through a process of purification. Just as Isaiah described his concerns at not being pure before God, there is a notion in Exodus that the

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<sup>228</sup> Exodus 19:16-17.

<sup>229</sup> Isaiah 6:6-7.

<sup>230</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 302.

<sup>231</sup> W. Guther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAH Press, 1996) 169.

people must purify themselves for God. And, in both cases, the people actually go through purification.

Another notable similarity between the haftarah and Torah portions is the description of human limitations. Isaiah describes the image of God that he witnesses. God's train "filled the temple"<sup>233</sup> and God's presence "filled all the earth!"<sup>234</sup> Isaiah portrays the infiniteness of God explaining that God fills the heavens and the earth. In contrast, Isaiah tells of King Uzziah's death. In this instance, Isaiah "realized that though mortal rulers come and go, God is in His heaven."<sup>235</sup> Humans are mortal creatures on earth. Yet, God's glory extends from the heavens to the earth eternally. In Exodus, the text also describes the limits of human power and ability. Moses, as the leader of the Israelites, seeks to solve every issue that arises among his people. Witnessing this model, Yitro, Moses' father-in-law, offers a new model of leadership. He advises Moses, "The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone."<sup>236</sup> Yitro then provides a plan to delegate responsibilities to other Israelites. Clearly, Yitro's message conveys the sense that humans can only do so much. God's unending rule in Isaiah contrasts with the image of humans' limitations in both the Isaiah and Exodus texts.

Nevertheless, though humans are limited in both passages, they are also in partnership with the divine. Isaiah ends with a hopeful message to the Israelites. He describes the birth of the future king of Israel. In this description, the prophet names the

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<sup>232</sup> Exodus 19:14-15.

<sup>233</sup> Isaiah 6:1.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid. 6:3.

<sup>235</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 302.

<sup>236</sup> Exodus 18:17-18.

king, "The Mighty God is planning grace; The Eternal Father, a peaceable ruler."<sup>237</sup>

Semitic names "often consist of sentences that describe God... These names do not describe that person who holds them but the god whom the parents worship."<sup>238</sup> As a result, the human king carries a name describing God. The king is not a separate ruler, working alone. Instead, he is intricately connected with the God of his people.

Furthermore, Isaiah 6:3 has become a basis for interaction between the humans and the divine. Each day, Jews pray the words of the angels during the Amidah. Though the human ritual is not included in the text:

...the visionary experience of the prophet Isaiah has... become the focal point of a communal rite in which the people of Israel participate in a heavenly ritual of divine enthronement—one that binds heaven and earth into a chorale or sanctification.<sup>239</sup>

When this portion is read as the haftarah in a congregation, it is reminiscent of the ritual that the people have performed earlier in the service. The call of the angels "holy, holy, holy" is the call of the people. Therefore, there is a divine and human partnership in the text of Isaiah, though it is less apparent than the partnership in Exodus.

Despite several significant similarities, the two texts differ in several important ways. First of all, there are several links between the haftarah portion and alternative Torah portions. For example, after Isaiah has a vision of the divine, he is fearful of the consequences of seeing God. He says, "Woe is me; I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips; Yet my own eyes have beheld the King

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<sup>237</sup> Isaiah 9:5.

<sup>238</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 802.

<sup>239</sup> Michael Fishbane. *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 111.

Eternal of Hosts.”<sup>240</sup> With this statement, Isaiah illustrates his concerns that “he will die, because he is not worthy to see God.”<sup>241</sup> Isaiah’s concerns are not arbitrary. In fact, there are several references in the Torah to the inability of man to live after seeing God. In Exodus 33:20, the Torah portion Ki Tissa. God tells Moses, “You cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live.”<sup>242</sup> Therefore, Isaiah’s fears at seeing God are validated by God’s own statement in Ki Tissa. God is the one who says that man cannot see the Divine. It may be worthwhile, thus, to explore the parallels between this haftarah portion and Ki Tissa and to evaluate the benefit of reading these two texts together.

Another possible text with which to read this haftarah portion is Exodus 24, is the portion Mishpatim. Just as Isaiah sees a vision of God in Isaiah 6:1, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel also “see” God. In Isaiah, God is “seated on a high and lofty throne; and the skirts of his robe filled the Temple.”<sup>243</sup> Isaiah views God as “seated,” like a human being. Similarly, the men in Exodus “saw the God of Israel: under his feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity.”<sup>244</sup> In both visions, the presence of God has “a marked anthropomorphic appearance.”<sup>245</sup> These two texts are related by the inclusion of a vision of God and the use of anthropomorphic imagery to describe this God. Therefore, it might be useful to explore further connections between Isaiah 6 and Mishpatim.

In addition to links to the Torah portions Ki Tissa and Mishpatim, there are connections between the haftarah portion and Shemot. In both texts, God calls the

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<sup>240</sup> Isaiah 6:5.

<sup>241</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, The Jewish Study Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 797.

<sup>242</sup> Exodus 33:20.

<sup>243</sup> Isaiah 6:1.

<sup>244</sup> Exodus 24:10.



leaders to service. God asks Isaiah, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"<sup>246</sup> God appears before Isaiah and then turns to the prophet as a possible messenger to the people. Likewise, God comes to Moses and says, "Come, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt."<sup>247</sup> God looks to both Isaiah and Moses to fulfill a Divine mission. Moreover, in both cases, the leaders respond with a sense of unworthiness. Isaiah focuses in fear on his impurities. If he is impure, how can he witness God? Moses also responds with humility. He says, "'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?'"<sup>248</sup> Moses' is not only concerned with his inability, in general as a leader, but more specifically with his speech, or his "unworthy mouth."<sup>249</sup> He is "slow of speech and slow of tongue" and therefore, does not believe that he can be a leader.<sup>250</sup> Isaiah's and Moses' missions, their calls from God, and their responses link clearly link these two texts.

One final connection between this haftarah and an alternative Torah portion comes with the notion of one's inability to hear or respond to a message from God. Before Isaiah embarks on his mission, God warns him that the people will not listen to his words. Instead, God instructs Isaiah to "Dull the people's mind, stop (*hakbed*) its ears and seal its eyes..."<sup>251</sup> Isaiah's prophecy is a counter-prophecy: he is told to do the opposite of what prophets do. Instead of encouraging the people to listen, he encourages them to be deaf to his cries. He "hardens" their hearts. This very same verb, *kaved*,

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<sup>245</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 111.

<sup>246</sup> Isaiah 6:8.

<sup>247</sup> Exodus 3:10.

<sup>248</sup> Exodus 3:11.

<sup>249</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 108.

<sup>250</sup> Exodus 4:10.

<sup>251</sup> Isaiah 6:10.

appears in the Torah portion Bo. There God tells Moses to go Pharaoh, but he warns him, as he warns Isaiah, that the task will not be easy. God says, "Go to Pharaoh. For I have hardened (*hikbad'ti*) his heart."<sup>252</sup> The two texts share a verbal and a thematic similarity. The verb *kaved* appears in both passages. Moreover, this "hardening" prevents the people, in one case, and Pharaoh, in the other, from hearing the word of God. As a result, they both face further punishment.

There are additional discrepancies, which differentiate the haftarah portion from the Torah portion Yitro. In Isaiah, the prophet encounters God alone. There is a personal vision of the Holy One.<sup>253</sup> In contrast, in Exodus 20, there is a communal experience with God. "All the people witnessed the thunder and the lightening, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking."<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, some commentators claim that Isaiah, as an individual, witnesses God in different ways than the Israelites, as a group. As Ya'akovson writes, "An entire people merits only to hear the voice of God. But Isaiah the only one and the chosen one merits, as it were, also of seeing something from his Holy Shekinah."<sup>255</sup> With Isaiah's experience, he sees God on a high throne and he hears the voice of God.<sup>256</sup> Isaiah's vision includes both sight and sound. However, Ya'akovson believes that the Israelites only heard God, but did not see God. In order to support his argument, Ya'akovson refers to Deuteronomy 4:12, "The Eternal spoke to you out of the fire; you heard the sound of words but perceived no shape -- nothing but a voice..." Though the Torah portion does not explicitly state that the people only heard the voice of God and did not see the Holy One, Ya'akovson believes that Deuteronomy

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<sup>252</sup> Exodus 10:1.

<sup>253</sup> Isaiah 6:1.

<sup>254</sup> Exodus 20:15.

<sup>255</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Haazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 185.

conveys this understanding. I believe that Ya'akovson's argument does not prove that one should not read the haftarah and Torah portions together. It is a notable difference, but only Yitro will be read with this Isaiah text, not the Deuteronomy text.

Finally, the two texts diverge in their descriptions of the people's reactions to their leaders. In Isaiah, the people will not listen to the prophet. As mentioned above, Isaiah will "dull that people's mind, stop its ears, and seal its eyes."<sup>257</sup> Commentators understand these three verbs in several different ways. These verbs are in the imperative form. Therefore, some say that God wants Isaiah to make it impossible for the people to listen and obey God's message. In contrast, other commentators say that the verbs are in future tense. Thus, "...God does not order Isaiah to cause the people to misunderstand; rather God predicts that they will not achieve understanding in spite of Isaiah's speeches, because the people do not want to acknowledge the truth."<sup>258</sup> In either case, Isaiah faces a challenging task. He must act unlike any other prophet, encouraging the people not to hear or respond to his call. In Yitro, Moses' faces a very different situation. Instead of the people turning away from God's words,<sup>259</sup> they embrace what the Divine has said. Immediately, the people say that they will follow God and God's laws. In Exodus 19:8, "All the people answered as one saying, 'All that the Eternal has spoken we will do!'"<sup>259</sup> In Isaiah, there is a remarkable moment of meeting God, followed by obstinacy of the people. In Exodus, there is also a remarkable moment of meeting God, but in this case it is followed by a communal acceptance of God's laws. Therefore, these texts convey very different messages. Is it the leader who steps up and follows God or the entire people of

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<sup>256</sup> Isaiah 6:1: 6:8.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. 6:10.

<sup>258</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 797.

Israel? Are there alternative haftarah texts that can convey the same hopeful message of the Torah?

A possible alternative is 2 Kings 23:1-5, which can be read with Exodus 19:1-25. In the Exodus narrative, this chapter describes the revelation at Mt. Sinai. Moses speaks to the people of their obligations to God and of their chosenness. In 2 Kings 23:1-5, a second revelation occurs. After many years, King Josiah has recovered a scroll from the Temple. After hearing its message, he brings the scroll to the people, hoping to instill a renewed understanding of the covenant and of their obligations to God. "The king went up to the House of the Eternal, together with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem...and all the people, you and old. And he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll..."<sup>260</sup> Similarly, "Moses came and summoned the elders of the people and put before them all that the Eternal had commanded him."<sup>261</sup> The leaders bring the word of God to their people. Furthermore, the response of the Israelites in the 2 Kings text parallels the response of the people in the Exodus text. After Josiah tells them of the laws of the covenant, the people "entered into the covenant" or more literally, "all the people stood with the covenant."<sup>262</sup> The people quickly agree to follow the commandments of God. The Israelites respond similarly in Exodus 19:8 "All that the Eternal has spoken we will do!"<sup>263</sup> The people wholeheartedly agree to the covenant, which God has brought before them.

In addition, both texts address the issue of the Israelites' loyalty to God. In Exodus, one line directly deals with this difficulty. God says, "...if you will obey Me

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<sup>259</sup> Exodus 19:8.

<sup>260</sup> 2 Kings 23:2.

<sup>261</sup> Exodus 19:7.

<sup>262</sup> 2 Kings 23:3.

faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine."<sup>264</sup> Clearly, the Israelites have responsibilities within this covenant: they must be faithful to God. In 2 Kings 23, Josiah insists upon this loyalty to God. After he has read the scroll to the people, he begins a campaign to destroy all the idols and the places of worship dedicated to other gods. The people's dedication to the covenant prevents them from continuing their idol worship. To be God's "treasured possessions" they must no longer follow other gods.

A.M. Klein's poem, "Thou Hast Chosen Us" could be an interesting alternative to the traditional haftarah. Klein describes the Israelites' unique status as God's people, separated from all other nations. "And Thou hast raised us above all nations, and with Thy laws hast blessed and hallowed us..."<sup>265</sup> In the Exodus passage, God does exactly this action. God says, "...if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."<sup>266</sup> God continues with a list of the laws of the covenant. God distinguishes the people and then provides a blueprint by which the Israelites will live separately from all other nations in the world. A.M. Klein imagines this chosenness quite differently than the Torah. After he describes God's act of distinguishing the people he writes, "Oy, geweld! Oy, geweld!"<sup>267</sup> He repeats this expression 8 times through out the poem, even though the poem itself is only eleven lines in length. A.M. Klein, therefore, presents a slightly negative, or at least cautionary,

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<sup>263</sup> Exodus 19:8.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid. 19:5.

<sup>265</sup> A.M. Klein, "Thou Hast Chosen Us" The Collected Works of A.M. Klein: Completed Poems Part II, Original Poems 19937-1955, and Poetry Translations (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 842.

<sup>266</sup> Exodus 19:5-6.

<sup>267</sup> A.M. Klein, "Thou Hast Chosen Us" The Collected Works of A.M. Klein: Completed Poems Part II, Original Poems 19937-1955, and Poetry Translations (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 842.

interpretation of the covenant between God and the people. God will protect the people, but "Oy, gewald!" Being chosen is not always such a good thing.

In her book, *Standing Again at Sinai*, Judith Plaskow explores some of these same ideas. She examines the views of chosenness presented in the Torah, as well as the changing views of chosenness, which have evolved through out Jewish history in the section "Chosenness, Hierarchy, and Difference." Living in a society where "all men are created equal," Jews may begin to question, why the Jewish religion makes a distinction between others and us. Why should we hold a special status? Do we even want to possess this status? Plaskow addresses these very questions. As she writes, "chosenness is a complex and evolving idea in Judaism that is not always associated with claims to superiority."<sup>268</sup> Through her exploration, Plaskow present a number of ideas, which can lead to discussions and further questions within congregations. Instead of accepting the notion of chosenness at face value, Plaskow's work encourages one to examine the idea further. Therefore, this work can be a significant counterpart to the Exodus text.

One final alternative, Shimon Halkin's poem, "Before Your Wonders I Stand, My World" can be paired with Exodus 19:16-20:23. In the Exodus text, God comes before the people. They witness the trembling of the mountain, the sights and sounds of revelation. Halkin's poem describes a longing for this direct experience of God. He writes, "Before your wonders I stand, my world. Who are you? My blood convulses as I envision you..."<sup>269</sup> Certainly there are miracles in the world, but Halkin cannot even imagine the God to whom he prays. He longs to encounter the Deity. What seemed

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<sup>268</sup> Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco 1990), 97.

simple for the people in Exodus, who witness the revelation at Sinai, is quite difficult for us, who live today. Where is God? Where is that direct revelation? Halkin concludes his poem with these words: "Pray — reveal yourself, my bereaved soul is weary."<sup>270</sup> Halkin searches for that moment of meeting with God. Yet, this search is not an easy one, for his soul "is weary." How do we relate to the revelation at Sinai, when we can only imagine what happened there? How tedious is it for us to continue our search for something as wondrous and miraculous as what happened at Mt. Sinai? Halkin's poem addresses some of these questions, these needs, and these frustrations.

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<sup>269</sup> Shimon Halkin. "Before Your Wonders I Stand, My World" Modern Hebrew Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 138.

## Chapter 6: Mishpatim

The next Torah portion, Mishpatim, Exodus 21:1-24:18, is accompanied by the haftarah portion Jeremiah 34:8-22; 33:25-26. Several significant similarities link one text to the other. The haftarah portion begins with a description of King Zedekiah's covenant with the people of Israel. He insists that the Israelites free their Hebrew slaves and "that no one should keep his fellow Judean enslaved."<sup>271</sup> Though the people of Israel initially comply, they eventually abandon their promise. As a result, God reminds them of the covenant between the Divine and their ancestors: "In the seventh year each of you must let go any fellow Hebrew who may be sold to you; when he has served you six years, you must set him free."<sup>272</sup> The Torah portion begins with a similar statement. "When you acquire a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years; in the seventh year he shall go free, without payment."<sup>273</sup> Therefore, the Torah portion "opens with the enactment to free a Hebrew bondman after six years' service. The haftarah records a grave breach of this regulation at a critical hour of Israel's history."<sup>274</sup> The beginning verses of both the haftarah and Torah portions focus on the same issue: the limitation of debt bondage.<sup>275</sup> Hebrew slaves do not serve their Hebrew masters indefinitely. Instead, the masters release these slaves after six years of service.

With this thematic connection comes a verbal link. In Jeremiah 34:14, the prophet uses the word *hofshi*, free,<sup>276</sup> to describe the Hebrew slave after he has completed his service. Likewise, in Exodus 21:2, after six years, the Hebrew slave will go *hofshi*,

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>271</sup> Jeremiah 34:9.

<sup>272</sup> Jeremiah 34:14.

<sup>273</sup> Exodus 21:2.

<sup>274</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 323.

<sup>275</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftorot* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 119.



free.<sup>277</sup> Not only are the two passages connected by their focus on manumission, but also through the similar words used to describe this process.

Another clear connection between the two texts is the link between the covenant with God and the release of the slaves. In the haftarah portion, as God reproaches the Israelites when they reacquire their slaves, God reminds the people of the covenant with their ancestors. God says, "I made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage..."<sup>278</sup> Directly after this statement, God tells the people the exact stipulations of this covenant. God says, "'In the seventh year each of you must let go any fellow Hebrew who may be sold to you..."<sup>279</sup> There is a direct correlation, thus, between the covenant with God and the release of the slaves in the Jeremiah text. In Exodus 21, the people of Israel stand at Mt. Sinai, witnessing God's revelation. God says, "These are the rules that you shall set before them: When you acquire a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years; in the seventh year he shall go free..."<sup>280</sup> God conveys to the Israelites the laws that they must follow to comply with their covenant with God. The law concerning Hebrew slaves appears as the first commandment in Mishpatim. As a result, Michael Fishbane writes, "...just this link between the manumission rule and Sinai explains the rabbinic decision to recite Jeremiah 34:8-22 together with Exodus 21:1-24:18. The rabbinic tally is thus both thematic (manumission) and conceptual ('covenant')."<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Jeremiah 34:14.

<sup>277</sup> Exodus 21:2.

<sup>278</sup> Jeremiah 34:13.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. 34:14.

<sup>280</sup> Exodus 21:1-2.

<sup>281</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 119.

As with the description of the release of Hebrew slaves, the recounting of the covenantal agreements connects these passages both thematically and verbally. Through out the Jeremiah text, there are three different covenants. King Zedekiah creates a covenant with the Israelites "to proclaim a release among them—that everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves..."<sup>282</sup> Next, God reminds the Israelites of the "covenant with your fathers," which references to the laws of manumission.<sup>283</sup> Finally, God refers to the covenant "with day and night—the laws of heaven and earth."<sup>284</sup> Just as God established this covenant, God vows never to reject the Israelites. These three references to covenants, according to Fishbane, comprise the present (King Zedekiah), the past (Mt. Sinai) and the future (God's promise to the people).<sup>285</sup> The Torah portion also focuses on the beginnings of a covenant. However, in this case, there is one specific covenant instead of three. God tells the people the laws of the covenant. After Moses reads the laws to the people, the Israelites vow "'all that the Eternal has spoken we will faithfully do."<sup>286</sup> Through a ritual sacrifice, Moses affirms the covenantal relationship. He sprinkles the blood of the sacrifice upon the people and says, "'This is the blood of the covenant that the Eternal now makes with you concerning all these commands."<sup>287</sup> Evidently, the theme of covenant pervades both texts.

In addition, the haftarah and Torah portions use similar language to describe the creation of these covenants. In Jeremiah, God remembers the covenant that the people made with God, though the people have now broken that covenant. God says, *lo heqimu*

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<sup>282</sup> Jeremiah 34:8-9.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid. 34:13-14.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid. 33:25.

<sup>285</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 115.

<sup>286</sup> Exodus 24:7.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid. 24:8.

*et divrei habrit asher karatu*, "They did not fulfill the covenant which they made."<sup>288</sup> As is common in biblical Hebrew, the expression *karet brit* means the making of a covenant. The same language appears in Exodus. God *karet*, makes, the *brit*, covenant, with the people of Israel.<sup>289</sup> As a result, the theme of the covenant and the language describing the covenant join the two texts.

In the haftarah and Torah portions, the violation of the covenant leads to punishment. Yet, this punishment is not arbitrary. Instead, the actions of the Israelites directly correspond with God's response. Jeremiah uses the verb *shuv* or turn several times through out the text. After the Israelites agreed to release their slaves, they "turned about and brought back them men and women they had set free, and forced them into slavery again."<sup>290</sup> Though they originally repented or turned, *shuv*, towards God, they have now turned away from God. As a result, God will *shuv* as well. In Jeremiah 34:22, God says, "I will bring them back (*hashivotim*) against this city."<sup>291</sup> God vows that he will return the Babylonians to attack the Israelites. In response to the Israelites' "turning," God "turns" the Babylonians. As John Bright, author of *Jeremiah (Anchor Bible)*, writes, a "punishment to fit the crime."<sup>292</sup> In Jeremiah 34:17, there is a similar pattern. God says, "You would not obey Me and proclaim a release, each to his kinsman and countryman. Lo! I will proclaim your release...to the sword, pestilence and to famine..."<sup>293</sup> In response to the violation of the covenant, God punishes the people

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<sup>288</sup> Jeremiah 34:18.

<sup>289</sup> Exodus 24:8.

<sup>290</sup> Jeremiah 34:11.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid. 34:22.

<sup>292</sup> John Bright, *Jeremiah (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1965) 567.

<sup>293</sup> Jeremiah 34:17.

according to their actions. "God invokes a type of measure for measure: The Judeans did not release slaves, so God will release destruction."<sup>294</sup>

God's punishment of the Israelites in Exodus also relates directly to their actions. In Exodus 22:21-23, God tells the people what will happen if they mistreat a widow or an orphan. God says, "...My anger shall blaze forth and I will put you to the sword, and your own wives shall become widows and your children orphans."<sup>295</sup> Mistreatment of widows or orphans leads to the widowing of wives and the orphaning of children. Similarly, in Exodus 21:23-25, God invokes measure for measure. In this case, God says, "...if other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."<sup>296</sup> God plans for the punishment of individuals. What one individual has done to another, will happen to that first individual. Evidently, the Israelites' actions reverberate in God's punishments in both texts.

These similarities connect the two portions in key ways. Additional links tie one passage to the other, although they are less significant than earlier examples. For instance, despite the Israelites' defiance, God assures the people that he will ultimately protect them. In Jeremiah 33, this promise is made without stipulations. God vows:

As surely as I have established My covenant with day and night...so I will never reject the offspring of Jacob and My servant David; I will never fail to take from his offspring rulers for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Indeed, I will restore their fortunes and take them back in love.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 998.

<sup>295</sup> Exodus 22:23.

<sup>296</sup> Exodus 21:23-25.

<sup>297</sup> Jeremiah 33:25-26.

Though God punishes the Israelites now, God will insure their safety and prosperity in the future. In Exodus, God makes a similar promise. However, in this case, the people must follow the laws of the covenant in order to receive their reward. God says, if:

You do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes... You shall serve the Eternal your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will remove sickness from you midst. Now woman in the land shall miscarry or be barren. I will let you enjoy the full count of your days.<sup>298</sup>

God ultimately will protect the people if they follow the covenantal laws. Therefore, in both texts, God promises the Israelites security even though in Jeremiah this security is unconditional, while in the Exodus passage it depends on the Israelites' actions.

Additionally, there are two verbal similarities between the texts. Nevertheless, these connections do not seem to provide a definitive link. God complains in Jeremiah that the Israelites did not obey and they would not "give ear."<sup>299</sup> The word for ear, *ozen*, is also in the Exodus passage. In that text, God does say that Hebrew slaves may remain with their Hebrew masters after six years, if the Hebrew slaves so choose. In these instances, the master will pierce the "ear" of the slave.<sup>300</sup> Though the Hebrew word for ear is in both texts, there is no significant connection to link these references. Similarly, as stated above, the word "shuv" plays an important role in the Jeremiah text. The people "turn" from God, so God "turns" the Babylonians towards them.<sup>301</sup> In Exodus, as Moses ascends Mt. Sinai, he instructs the elders to wait for him and for Aaron "until we return (*nashuv*) to you."<sup>302</sup> Again, there is an overlapping of words. But, these verbal similarities do not appear to have clear significance.

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<sup>298</sup> Exodus 23:22-26.

<sup>299</sup> Jeremiah 34:14.

<sup>300</sup> Exodus 21:6.

<sup>301</sup> Jeremiah 34:11; 34:22.

<sup>302</sup> Exodus 24:14.

The haftarah and Torah portions converge in several meaningful ways. Nevertheless, there are key differences between the two texts. One of the primary reasons why one may choose not to read these texts together is that the haftarah portion is, in some cases, more similar to other Torah portions than to Mishpatim. In Jeremiah 34, King Zedekiah does not provide a specific reason for the release of Hebrew slaves. Commentators suggest several possibilities. Since Zedekiah releases all Hebrew slaves at one time, this release may be a Jubilee Year release.<sup>303</sup> Another possibility is "slaves were released en masse in time of national emergencies, such as the present one... (because) if they were free, they could be drafted into the army."<sup>304</sup> A final possibility is that in this time of siege, owners may not have been able to provide sustenance for their slaves.<sup>305</sup> In Jeremiah, the Israelites free all of their slaves at one time. However, in Exodus 21:1, masters release their slaves according to the time that these slaves have been serving them. This law does not call for the universal release of slaves at one time. Yet, there are several passages in the Torah that do call for this type of release. For instance, in Leviticus 25, God tells the Israelites that a slave "shall serve with you only until the jubilee year."<sup>306</sup> Both Leviticus and Jeremiah speak of the mass release of slaves, while Exodus does not.

In addition, the Jeremiah and Exodus passages speak differently of male and female slaves. In Jeremiah 34:10, King Zedekiah announces to the people: "...everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves, both male and female, and that no one should keep his

<sup>303</sup> John Bright, *Jeremiah (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1965) 559.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.* 559.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.* 559.

<sup>306</sup> Leviticus 25:40.

fellow Judean enslaved.”<sup>307</sup> The Jeremiah text includes the release of male and female slaves. In contrast, in the Torah portion, masters release only male slaves after six years of service. In fact, the text stipulates what will happen to the wife and children of the slave.<sup>308</sup> As a result, the original focus is on a male slave, not a female. Moreover, the Exodus text sets different rules for women. For example, “when a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not be freed as male slaves are.”<sup>309</sup> Whereas the Jeremiah text tells of the release of male and female slaves together, the Exodus text puts these slaves in different categories. In Deuteronomy 15:12, the text includes a law more similar to the stipulations recounted in Jeremiah. “If a fellow Hebrew, man or woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years and in the seventh year you shall set him free.” Again, masters release both men and women after the six years of service. Accounts of this law in Jeremiah and Deuteronomy are of a more “inclusive nature”<sup>310</sup> than in Exodus.

Moreover, verbal similarities link the Jeremiah and Deuteronomy texts. For instance, in Jeremiah 34:14, God instructs the people to “set free” or *shalach hofshi* their Hebrew slaves. This same expression appears in Deuteronomy 15:12. “He shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall set him free (*t’shalchemi hofshi*).”<sup>311</sup> Yet, in Exodus 21:2, the expression is *yetze lahofshi*, or “he shall go free.”<sup>312</sup> In Jeremiah and Deuteronomy, the masters release their slaves. In Exodus, the slave is an active participant and he goes free. Similarly, both Jeremiah and Deuteronomy describe the acquisition of a slave with the expression, when the slave “is sold to you” or *yimmaker*.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Jeremiah 34:10.

<sup>308</sup> Exodus 21:2-5.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid. 21:7.

<sup>310</sup> John Bright, *Jeremiah (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1965) 561.

<sup>311</sup> Deuteronomy 15:12.

<sup>312</sup> Exodus 21:2.

<sup>313</sup> Jeremiah 34:14; Deuteronomy 15:12.

In contrast, Exodus 21:2 says, "When you acquire (*tiqneh*) a slave."<sup>314</sup> The owner "acquires" a slave; the slave is not "sold" to the owner. As a result of these differences, it may be more worthwhile to pair Jeremiah 34 and Deuteronomy 15, instead of Jeremiah and Exodus 21.

Another possible discrepancy between the haftarah and Torah texts arises with the link between the covenant and the law on slavery. Issachar Ya'akovson writes, "According to the simple meaning of the Torah, we do not find any special creation of a covenant for a commandment of releasing the slave."<sup>315</sup> Ya'akovson's concern is that Jeremiah refers to a specific covenant formed between God and the Israelites concerning this law of slavery. In contrast, Exodus discusses this law as one of many that are part of a larger covenant. In the end, it is Ya'akovson who resolves this difficulty. He writes that the stipulations on releasing he slaves "is one of many commandments that upon its establishment was the making of the covenant."<sup>316</sup>

Because of the central focus upon slavery in the haftarah, it may be worthwhile to explore alternative texts to read with the Exodus portion. Though the Exodus text does refer to the laws concerning slaves, it also discusses many other commandments. Its focus is not primarily on slavery. Or, another solution could be to only read the Jeremiah text with a portion of the Exodus text. Exodus 21:1-27 describes the rules surrounding the treatment of slaves. In addition, it includes the measure-for-measure notion of punishment, which is present in the haftarah as well. Though this pairing does not solve every difficulty—the haftarah text may still be about the jubilee, the universal release of

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<sup>314</sup> Exodus 21:2.

<sup>315</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 192.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid. 193.



the slaves; while the Torah is about an individual manumission—it does create a greater focus within the Torah portion on the theme of slavery.

At the end of the Torah portion, the people come before God and recite the words, “All the things the Eternal has commanded, we will do!”<sup>317</sup> Moses then sets up the altar, chooses men to sacrifice upon it, and reads the words of the covenant to the people. Again, the people swear their allegiance to this covenant and to God. Finally, Moses ascends the mountain, remaining there for 40 days and nights, to receive the revelation. This last chapter of the Torah portion includes one of the most significant narratives in Israel’s long history: the meeting of God and the people to reaffirm the covenant after the Exodus. Nehemiah 8:1-3; 9:1-13, describes a similar process. After hearing the words of the Torah,<sup>318</sup> the people gather together to affirm their loyalty to God. As they devoted themselves to the covenant in the Exodus passage after Moses “took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people,”<sup>319</sup> so here they actively dedicate themselves to God, through separation from other nations, purification and prostration once Ezra has read the Teaching.<sup>320</sup> Moreover, in the text of Nehemiah, the Levites begin to praise God for all that God has done for the Israelites. In their declarations, they recount the very occurrences that have happened in the Torah portion. “You led them by day...and by night...You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke to them from heaven; You gave them right rules and true teachings, good laws and commandments...”<sup>321</sup> There are significant links, therefore, between these two texts. Since the specific lists of commandments may be a less appealing part of the portion to a modern audience, the

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<sup>317</sup> Exodus 4:3.

<sup>318</sup> Nehemiah 8:2.

<sup>319</sup> Exodus 24:7.

<sup>320</sup> Nehemiah 9:2-3.

description of the revelation and the people's enthusiasm and dedication can be more inspiring. Therefore, by pairing this haftarah with the end of the Torah portion, the focus can shift from the exact stipulations of the covenant to the meaning and power of the moment of revelation.

Another possible pairing is Exodus 22:20-26 with Ruth Brin's poem, "Strangers." In the Exodus text, God says, "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."<sup>322</sup> The Exodus text then describes different ways to treat other human beings: including the widow or orphan and one who borrows money. Brin's poem addresses this very issue of how we act towards other individuals. "We pray You help us to remember the heart of the stranger when we walk in freedom. Help us to be fair and upright in all our dealings with other people..."<sup>323</sup> Brin explores the notion of what it means to "not wrong a stranger" because "we were strangers in the land of Egypt" in the world today. Moreover, she refers to a broader historical context: we were not just strangers in Egypt, but in Babylon, Berlin, Kiev, etc. What impact do our more recent experiences as strangers have on our understanding of this commandment?

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid. 9:12-13.

<sup>322</sup> Exodus 22:20.

<sup>323</sup> Ruth Brin, "Strangers" *Harvest: Collected Poems and Prayers*. (Minnesota: Holy Cow! Press, 1999), 49.

## Chapter 7: Terumah

The Torah portion, Terumah, Exodus 25:1-27:19, has much in common with 1 Kings 5:26-6:13, the haftarah portion with which it is read. The two texts correspond verbally in several places. In 1 Kings 6:5, Solomon builds the Temple and makes "...a storied structure; and...side (*tz'laot*) chambers all around."<sup>324</sup> Similarly, in the structure that the Israelites build in Exodus, the Tabernacle, they make "...four gold rings for it, to be attached to its four feet, two rings on one of its side (*tzalo*) walls and two on the other."<sup>325</sup> Just as a piece of the structure wraps around the side of the Temple, so too do the gold rings decorate the sides of the Tabernacle.

Likewise, within the description of the building of these two structures there is similar vocabulary. As is customary in the Bible, the unit of measurement is a cubit or *amah*. "The House which King Solomon built for the Eternal was 60 cubits long."<sup>326</sup> Similarly, the Israelites use the cubit to determine the proper measurements of the tabernacle. "The length of each cloth shall be four cubits..."<sup>327</sup> Another verbal connection is the *lulim* or *lulaot*. In 1 Kings, this word means a winding staircase.<sup>328</sup> In Exodus, the same word refers to "loops" placed on the edge of the outermost cloth of the Tabernacle.<sup>329</sup> Nevertheless, though the meanings do not exactly correspond, the two forms share "the same root."<sup>330</sup>

Finally, a description of the Temple and Tabernacle similarly use the word *kalah* or "to finish." In 1 Kings 6:9, when Solomon "finished building the House, he paneled

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<sup>324</sup> 1 Kings 6:5.

<sup>325</sup> Exodus 25:12.

<sup>326</sup> 1 Kings 6:2.

<sup>327</sup> Exodus 26:2.

<sup>328</sup> 1 Kings 6:8.

<sup>329</sup> Exodus 26:4.

<sup>330</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 240.

the house with beams..."<sup>331</sup> In Exodus, when Moses "finished the work, the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting..."<sup>332</sup> Though the second reference to the finishing of the work does not come until Exodus 40:33, it completes the process that Moses began in the Torah portion, Terumah. Moreover, this same verb describes the completion of God's process of creation in Genesis. "...Both cases echo the statement that 'God finished' (*vayekhal*) His work of creation on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2)."<sup>333</sup> In sum, verbal similarities clearly link the haftarah and Torah portions.

One of the principal thematic connections between these two texts is the description of the building of a dwelling place for God. In 1 Kings, Solomon leads the people and the foreign workers in building the Temple. In Exodus, Moses leads the Israelites in the desert in building the Tabernacle. Both places, significantly, are built so God may dwell amongst the people. After Solomon and the people have completed the Temple, God tells them "'I will abide among the children of Israel and I will never forsake My people Israel.'"<sup>334</sup> Similarly, in Exodus 25:8, God says, "'Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.'"<sup>335</sup> In fact, these two examples are verbally similar in addition to the thematic connections. In both cases God will dwell (*veshakanti*) amongst (*betok*) the Israelites.

In addition, the texts coincide because of the process the people use to build these structures. In both cases, the texts describe, in detail, the measurements and specificity of the buildings. Solomon makes "a portico in front of the Great Hall of the House...and

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<sup>331</sup> 1 Kings 6:9.

<sup>332</sup> Exodus 40:33.

<sup>333</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002). 122.

<sup>334</sup> 1 Kings 6:13.

<sup>335</sup> Exodus 25:8.

windows for the House, recessed and latticed. Against the outside wall of the House...he built a storied structure; and he made side chambers all around it."<sup>336</sup> The text is very particular about the exact details of the Temple and speaks, in great length, about these details. Likewise, the Israelites do not haphazardly build the Tabernacle, without a plan. Instead, their process is incredibly detailed. God says, "'They shall make an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold...and make upon it a gold molding..."<sup>337</sup> And the description does not end there. In fact, it continues for the entire Torah portion. Solomon and Moses, therefore, both build according to a detailed plan.

The Temple and Tabernacle are also similar in structure. The I Kings text describes the shrine, or Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctuary of the Temple.<sup>338</sup> Similarly, the Exodus passage describes the characteristics of the Holy of Holies: "Hang the curtain under the clasps, and carry the Ark of the Pact there, behind the curtain, so that the curtain shall serve as a partition between the Holy and the Holy of Holies."<sup>339</sup> Both passages refer to the threefold structure that "characterized the Tabernacle" and the Temple.<sup>340</sup> God instructs the Israelites to divide the Temple and the Tabernacle into three parts: the outer chamber, *hekal* or inner sanctuary, and the Holy of Holies. The haftarah and Torah portions describe the beginnings of this separation.

One difference between the two passages is the understanding that the Temple is a permanent dwelling and the Tabernacle a portable, temporary one. The Temple remains

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<sup>336</sup> I Kings 6:3-5.

<sup>337</sup> Exodus 25:10-11.

<sup>338</sup> I Kings 6:5.

<sup>339</sup> Exodus 26:33.

<sup>340</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 121.

in Jerusalem, built in one area and standing in one are until its destruction. However, the people are not static in the desert. They move from place to place.<sup>341</sup> Therefore, the Israelites construct the tabernacle so it can move with them. As Michael Fishbane writes:

The parashah and the haftarah mark two phases of Israelite worship. The first is centered around the portable Tabernacle in the desert, where the Eternal could dwell as He chose; the other is centered around a permanent House in Jerusalem, for the Eternal's fixed earthly dwelling.<sup>342</sup>

According to Fishbane's theory, the two structures differ in their state of permanence and in the permanence or impermanence of God's presence. Yet, he concludes that these differences, in fact, are connected. He writes, "the linking of the parashah and haftarah does not require a choice between these models, but rather directs attention to their difference and potential interaction."<sup>343</sup> Within the characteristics of the structures that differentiate the two portions there is a possibility of interplay.

There are clear differences, though, between the two texts. In the haftarah, Solomon creates a system of decreed labor to build the Temple. "King Solomon imposed forced labor on all Israel; the levy came to 30,000 men."<sup>344</sup> The word in Hebrew, *mas*, used to describe this labor connotes its serious nature. The practice of *mas*, "corvée labor for the king," is documented in Canaan in the fourteenth century BC. Solomon, accordingly, was following an ancient model of oppressive Egypto-Canaanite kinship. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, "they were fatally familiar with the ugly word *mas*, the labor wrung from them by hard task-masters."<sup>345</sup> Solomon's forced labor is highly difficult work that the people must complete, whether they would have chosen to

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<sup>341</sup> Exodus 33:1.

<sup>342</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 123.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid. 123.

<sup>344</sup> 1 Kings 5:27.

or not. Moreover, the people who were given this task are not only Israelites. "And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites did fashion them."<sup>346</sup> Foreign men, alongside the people of Israel, work to complete the Temple. On the other hand, the Torah portion describes the Israelite men and women who brought gifts for the tabernacle because their "heart so moves"<sup>347</sup> them. In fact, in Exodus 36:6-7, Moses needs to stop the gift giving, because the people have brought "more than enough for all the tasks to be done."<sup>348</sup> The Israelites offer up their possessions to create the holy structure. Clearly, the "tabernacle of old was the result of the free-will offerings of the entire people."<sup>349</sup> In 1 Kings, Solomon assigns groups of men, Israelites and non-Israelites, to build the Temple, subjecting them to hard labor. In contrast, in Exodus, the Israelites volunteer themselves to help the construction of the Tabernacle.

Another apparent difference between the two portions is the given purpose of each of the structures. The haftarah concludes with the words of God:

"With regard to this House you are building—if you follow My laws and observe My rules and faithfully keep My commandments, I will fulfill for you the promise that I gave to your father David: I will abide among the children of Israel, and I will never forsake My people Israel."<sup>350</sup>

There is a conditional relationship between the actions of the Israelites and God's dwelling amongst them. If the people keep the commandments, then God will be with them. The Temple itself does not necessarily ensure the divine presence. Instead, the people, through their actions, determine their closeness with God.<sup>351</sup> In a different

<sup>345</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (London: Soncino Press, 1992), 336.

<sup>346</sup> 1 Kings 5:32.

<sup>347</sup> Exodus 25:2.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid 36:7.

<sup>349</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (London: Soncino Press, 1992), 336.

<sup>350</sup> 1 Kings 6:12-13.

<sup>351</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 123.

manner, the presence of God in the Torah portion depends only on the Tabernacle. God says, "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them."<sup>352</sup> If the people build the Tabernacle, God will be among them. In contrast to the haftarah, this portion does not make any additional specifications for what the people need to do to merit God's presence.

The two texts seem to differ in a final manner. In the haftarah portion, Solomon begins constructing the Temple, without direct instructions from God. God does not reveal a specific plan to Solomon as he builds the Temple. In contrast, the Torah portion includes a detailed description of the process for building the Tabernacle. God tells Moses and the people what to do, before they begin. "Exactly as I show you—the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings—so shall you make it."<sup>353</sup> The notion that temple plans are divinely revealed is attested as early as the late third millennium BCE. The Sumerian ruler Gudea of Lagash in southern Iraq describes how the plans were divinely revealed to him.<sup>354</sup> One author who has analyzed this text, Richard E. Averbeck, says that this text establishes a pattern, which appears in many Ancient Near East building texts. The formula include five different steps: the decision to build with an expression of divine sanction; the preparations for the building, including materials, workers and laying foundations; the description of the construction process the buildings and their furnishings; the dedication prayers and festivities; and the divine promises and blessings for the king. Though each of these steps does not occur in the specific verses of the haftarah text, they do occur either before or after it. In 1 Kings

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<sup>352</sup> Exodus 25:8.

<sup>353</sup> Exodus 25:9.

<sup>354</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, "The Cylinders of Gudea (2.155)," The Content of Scripture: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World. (Netherlands: Brill, 2000). 417.



5:17-19. Solomon references God's divine decree to his father, David, that he, Solomon, will be the one to build the Temple. And, 1 Kings 8 describes the celebration and consecration of the Temple.<sup>355</sup> Therefore, though the haftarah may not provide as detailed a blueprint as the Torah, it does follow the pattern of building texts from other Ancient Near Eastern cultures. By exploring the verses surrounding the text of the haftarah, God's detailed involvement in the process is clear.

By joining the haftarah and Torah portions, our traditions creates a link between the Tabernacle and the Temple. The texts converge, describing God's dwelling places, and the Israelites role in building those places. We may be in the desert or we may be settled in our homeland. Either way, the Divine moves with us, helping us to create a space where we can find God. This powerful message seems to counterbalance the differences between the two portions.

Nevertheless, I think it is essential to emphasize one particular part of the Torah portion that does not appear in the haftarah. At the beginning of the portion, God says to Moses, "'Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him.'"<sup>356</sup> God did not demand that each Israelite should donate something to the Tabernacle. Instead, only those individuals, who are inspired and motivated to give, should give. The Israelites do not build the Tabernacle, therefore, through their obligations, but through their donations and their strengths: they give what they are able to contribute and what they want to contribute. Moyshe Leib Halpern, a Yiddish writer in America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrote a poem entitled "Portrait of the Artist." He describes the distinct features of the narrator and the

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid. 417.

<sup>356</sup> Exodus 25:2.

uniqueness of the gift that this artist provides. The artist may not be able to dance for his "feet are motionless..."<sup>357</sup> However, "with a heart that hammers out My song, I sing me as I please, While to its tempo the world hops, the world hops to my liturgies."<sup>358</sup>

Halpern's poem focuses not upon others' skills, but upon the unique skills of this artist. He can contribute in a way that no one else can. As the author writes, "The eagle has his mighty wings, behold I have my mighty arms!"<sup>359</sup> Halpern's poem captures the notion of one giving only when his/her heart so moves him/her. When that person discovers his/her gift and can contribute to the community wholeheartedly.

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<sup>357</sup> Moyshe Leib Halpern, "Portrait of the Artist" Selected Poems: A.M. Klein (Collected Works of A.M. Klein) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 795.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.* 795.

## Chapter 8: Tetzaveh

Within the Ashkenazic tradition, it is customary to read the Torah portion Tetzaveh, Exodus 27:20-30:10, with the haftarah portion Ezekiel 43:10-27. Like previous portions, these two texts are related on both a verbal and thematic level. In the previous portion, the haftarah described the building of the Temple and the Torah described the building of the Tabernacle. In Tetzaveh, the texts describe the building of the altars in both the Temple and the Tabernacle. With this description comes the use of the word, *amah* or cubit. "And these are the dimensions of the altar, in cubits where each is a cubit and a handbreadth. The trench shall be a cubit deep and a cubit wide..."<sup>360</sup> The haftarah clearly identifies the unit of measurement, a cubit, within this passage. Likewise, the Torah portion describes the altar of the tabernacle by cubits. "It shall be a cubit long and a cubit wide..."<sup>361</sup> Clearly, the form of measurement used through out the Tanakh, the cubit, plays a prominent role in the building of the Temple and Tabernacle and of the altars within these buildings.

In addition, both texts describe the altar as having *qarnot* or horns. In the haftarah, as God relays the specific requirements for the Temple altar, God says "and the height of the altar hearth shall be four cubits, with four horns projecting upward from the hearth."<sup>362</sup> Just as the horns adorn the Temple altar, so too do they reside prominently upon the altar of the Tabernacle. There, the priests will take the blood of a bull and sprinkle it upon the horns of the altar (*qarnot hamizbeah*).<sup>363</sup> There are, then,

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<sup>359</sup> Moyshe Leib Halpern, "Portrait of the Artist" Selected Poems: A.M. Klein (Collected Works of A.M. Klein) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 795.

<sup>360</sup> Ezekiel 43:13.

<sup>361</sup> Exodus 30:1.

<sup>362</sup> Ezekiel 43:15.

<sup>363</sup> Exodus 29:12.

similarities in the designs of both the Temple and the Tabernacle. The words describing the Temple also describe the Tabernacle.

Two sacrificial terms also appear in both texts. The first is the whole burnt offering, the *olah*. In Ezekiel 43:24, the priests receive instructions to offer a bull and a ram, "throw salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering (*olah*) to the Eternal."<sup>364</sup> Gunther Plaut explains that the *olah* is "an offering that required the total burning of the animal (except for the skin) and nothing was to be eaten of it."<sup>365</sup> The *olah* is different from other sacrifices. Instead of burning it partially or eating it, the priests burn it completely. In Exodus 29:18, the text refers to this same type of offering. Aaron must "turn all of the ram into smoke upon the altar. It is a burnt offering (*olah*) to the Eternal."<sup>366</sup>

Another element of the sacrifice links these two texts verbally. As the priests make an offering to God, they bring two specific animals: "*ben-baqar tamim v'ayil min hatzon tamim*."<sup>367</sup> The priests must bring a pure bull from the herd and a pure ram. Interestingly, this same combination appears in the haftarah and Torah portions. In the haftarah, the priests make these offerings outside the sanctuary of the Temple. In the Torah portion, the priests are consecrated through the offering of a "*ben-baqar ve-elim shnaim t'mimim*," "a young bull of the herd and two rams without blemish."<sup>368</sup> The texts use the same wording and the same types of animals while describing the sacrifice.

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<sup>364</sup> Ezekiel 43:15.

<sup>365</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, The Haftarah Commentary (New York: UAHC Press, 1996) 198.

<sup>366</sup> Exodus 29:18.

<sup>367</sup> Ezekiel 43:23.

<sup>368</sup> Exodus 29:1.

One final expression connects the passages. In Ezekiel 43:26, God describes a cleansing of the altar so that it "shall be consecrated."<sup>369</sup> The expression for consecrated is *umilo yadav* or literally "shall fill its hands." Michael Fishbane explains the use of this phrase. "The ancient idiom (*shall fill its hands*) usually designates the appointment of persons to a special task. This is the only place in the Bible where the idiom refers to an object."<sup>370</sup> Thus, in Ezekiel, this expression connotes a consecration of the altar, an object. Interestingly, in Exodus 28:41, this expression describes the appointment of a person, the priest. As Fishbane explains, this second use of the expression is more common than the first. God says to Moses, "Put these on your brother Aaron and on his sons as well; anoint them and ordain them (*umileta et yadam*)..."<sup>371</sup> The expression describing the consecration of the altar and of the priests appears in both the haftarah and Torah portions.

The similarities between these two texts, though, are not limited to verbal connections. Instead, many thematic similarities link one passage to the other. One of the primary similarities is the description of the building of the altar. In Ezekiel, God describes the altar of the Temple. "And these are the dimensions of the altar, in cubits..."<sup>372</sup> In Exodus, God describes the altar of the Tabernacle. "You shall make an altar for burning incense; make it of acacia wood. It shall be a cubit long and a cubit wide..."<sup>373</sup> God reveals the plans for building the altars in the Torah and the Tabernacle, respectively, in these portions. Significantly, God's role in both passages "establishes the

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<sup>369</sup> Ezekiel 43:26.

<sup>370</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 127.

<sup>371</sup> Exodus 28:41.

<sup>372</sup> Ezekiel 43:13.

<sup>373</sup> Exodus 30:1-2.

divine authority of the two constructions."<sup>374</sup> The building of the Temple and the Tabernacle are not random acts. Instead, God commands the establishment of both.

Furthermore, the leaders dedicate the altars in both texts. As God says in Ezekiel, "Seven days they shall purge the altar and cleanse it; thus shall it be consecrated."<sup>375</sup> Once the people complete building the altar of the Temple, for seven days they "shall perform purification for the altar to consecrate it, and the altar shall become most holy..."<sup>376</sup> Not only do both passages describe the dedication of the altars, they also designate the length of time for this purification. As the number seven has a significant role in many passages in the Tanakh, it does here. Moreover, this number provides a connection between the haftarah and Torah portions.<sup>377</sup>

The Torah portion does not content itself with describing this consecration. It also provides the details of the dedication of Aaron and his sons as priests. Though the haftarah does not discuss consecration of a person or people, the exact process of consecration is very similar to the consecration of the priests in Exodus. In Ezekiel 43:20, God tells Ezekiel to "take some of its (a bull's) blood and apply it to the four horns (of the altar), to the four corners of the base, and to the surrounding rim; thus you shall purge it and perform purification upon it."<sup>378</sup> Ezekiel, as a leader, will cleanse the altar by sprinkling the bull's blood upon it. Similarly, in Exodus, Moses, as a leader must:

Slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the ridge of a Aaron's right ear and on the ridges of his sons' right ears...and sprinkle (it) upon Aaron and his vestments, and also upon his sons and his sons' vestments. Thus shall he and his vestments be holy, as well as his sons and his sons' vestments.<sup>379</sup>

<sup>374</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 127.

<sup>375</sup> Ezekiel 43:26.

<sup>376</sup> Exodus 29:37.

<sup>377</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 209.

<sup>378</sup> Ezekiel 43:20.

<sup>379</sup> Exodus 29:20-21.

As Ezekiel sprinkled the blood of an animal on the altar, so too did Moses sprinkle the blood of an animal on Aaron and his sons. Though the leaders do not consecrate the same things, an object versus humans, the way in which the leaders consecrate them is alike. Furthermore, in Exodus, God instructs Moses to throw blood on the horns of the altar,<sup>380</sup> as Ezekiel did. The text does not specifically say that Moses completes this task to consecrate the altar itself, but Aaron and his sons do not use the altar until they have completed this ritual. Ezekiel and Moses, therefore, both dedicate the altars and demonstrate that they are “mediators of new orders of cultic worship...”<sup>381</sup>

Interestingly, both texts describe the transformation of a human offering to a gift for the divine. Ezekiel tells the people of the offerings that they will make to God: the bull, the goat, and the ram. All of these animals are part of the present world. Yet, once they are presented on the altar, they become something more. “The altar is both the focal point of the sacrificial service and a means of access to God. It is here that the substances brought by penitents and the pious alike are transformed into gifts for God.”<sup>382</sup> In Exodus 29:28, the mundane items, such as rams, the breads and wafers, become offerings for God as they are brought to the altar. “They take the breast of Aaron’s ram of ordination and offer it as an elevation offering before the Eternal...and so shall they (the parts of the ram) be a gift from the Israelites, their gift to the Eternal out of their sacrifices of well-being.”<sup>383</sup> Upon the altar of the Temple and the altar of the Tabernacle, the priests transform every-day items into gifts for God.

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid. 29:12.

<sup>381</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 127.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid. 124.

<sup>383</sup> Exodus 29:26-28.

Another significant similarity between the two passages is the lineage of the priests offering the sacrifices. In Ezekiel, God instructs the prophet to "give to the levitical priests who are of the stock of Zadok, and so eligible to minister to Me... a young bull of the herd for a sin offering."<sup>384</sup> Several commentators discuss the lineage of Zadok. In 1 Chronicles 5:27-41, one learns that Zadok is a descendant in the line of Aaron. He is, therefore, linked to the priesthood of the original priest.<sup>385</sup> Moreover, this same passage mentions Phineas, grandson of Aaron, ancestor of Zadok. It is Phineas who "was rewarded with the covenant of an everlasting priesthood (Numbers 225:13). Only his descendants would be found worthy to minister in the Temple of the future."<sup>386</sup> Therefore, through a description of this lineage, the commentators legitimate the priesthood of Zadok in Ezekiel. Significantly, the Torah portion describes the beginning of the first priesthood, that of Aaron and his sons. God consecrates the ancestors of Zadok in this passage. "You shall bring forward your brother Aaron, with his sons, from among the Israelites, to serve Me as priests..."<sup>387</sup> The haftarah portion is intrinsically linked to the Torah portion through the continuity of the ancestral line of the priesthood.

Nevertheless, the link that the Chronicles passages establishes between Zadok and Aaron was not a link known or supported by Ezekiel. Only in the Persian period books Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles is the priesthood traced back to Aaron:

Ezekiel confers legitimacy on the sons of Zadok (Ezekiel 44:15-16), but not on the sons of Aaron. It is only with the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles, composed during the Persian period, that the Aaronide priesthood is depicted as the only legitimate line.<sup>388</sup>

<sup>384</sup> Ezekiel 43:19.

<sup>385</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (London: Soncino Press, 1992) 351.

<sup>386</sup> Rabbi Dr. S. Fisch, Ezekiel (London: Soncino Press, 1976) 299.

<sup>387</sup> Exodus 28:1.

<sup>388</sup> S. David Sperling, The Original Torah: The Political Intent of the Bible's Writers (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 115.



When the authors were composing texts during the Persian period, they believed that their could only be one priestly line. Therefore, they needed to reconcile earlier texts some that claimed that Aaron's family was the priestly line and others that gave this honor to Zadok and his ancestors. As a result, by analyzing the Bible through the lens of historical criticism, the inclusion of Zadok in the haftarah and Aaron in Torah can provide a link between the two texts. However, one should be aware of the complexities on this connection.

The construction and dedication of the altars, the ritual process of consecrating both objects and individuals, the worldly goods transformed into gifts for God, and the continuous line of Aaron are all similarities that link the haftarah and Torah portions. Nevertheless, it would be impossible to ignore the differences that also appear within these texts. One primary example is the given reason for these buildings and the altars within them. In the haftarah portion, the Israelites have sinned and have turned away from God. Ezekiel will, therefore, "describe the Temple to the House of Israel, and let them measure its design, and let them be ashamed of their iniquities."<sup>389</sup> God's intention is that the people will hear about the Temple and its design in order that they will realize what they have done wrong. The text implies that the "exquisite nature of the design will awaken in the viewers a sense of guilt that they had forfeited so beautiful a structure through their past sins, which brought about the destruction of the Temple."<sup>390</sup> God says that the promise of a new Temple will encourage the Israelites to repent for their mistakes, which induced the destruction of the first Temple. The design of the new Temple elicits shame and remorse. In Exodus, God instructs the people to build the

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<sup>389</sup> Ezekiel 43:10.

Temple directly following the revelation at Sinai. Many commentators perceive a direct relation between these two events. "Ramban lets us know that the tabernacle is destined to continue the situation at Mt. Sinai..."<sup>391</sup> The people witness God's wonder at Mt. Sinai. Instead of terminating the meeting between the people and God, God instructs the people to create a space for the Divine presence to reside. The encounter at Mt. Sinai continues through the Tabernacle. Moreover, God guides the people in creating this structure, and consecrating priests as leaders over it, as a reward. Again, Ramban says, "...those who are worthy are holy that there will be with them a sanctuary to serve his presence between them." In the haftarah portion, God wants Ezekiel to describe the Temple so that the Israelites will repent. On the contrary, in the Torah portion, God tells Moses to guide the people in creating the Tabernacle in order to reward them for their dedication and to encourage a continuous relationship with God.

Another difference between the altar of the Temple and the Tabernacle is that the Temple's altar is permanent and the Tabernacle's altar is not. In fact, the second altar is built to be broken down and reconstructed as the Israelites move through the desert.<sup>392</sup> Certainly then there is a temporal difference. Nevertheless, this difference seems minor compared to a spatial similarity. The "Tabernacle and Temple are sacred sites where God will be present on earth..."<sup>393</sup> Though the Israelites collapse and reconstruct the Tabernacle, it remains a constant place for encounters with God while the people are in the desert. Like the Temple, its significance arises due to this role. Therefore, a point, which could differentiate the two portions, instead connects the texts.

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<sup>391</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1996) 196.

<sup>391</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Haizon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 210.

<sup>392</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 127.

I believe, nonetheless, that providing alternative haftarah portions would be beneficial in this case. Not because the two texts are so contrary—they relate on many levels—but, because the motivation for the Temple comes from a place of sinning, whereas the motivation for the Tabernacle is divine inspiration. An additional haftarah portion could capture the illuminating and invigorating reality of a place designed to bring together God and the people of Israel.

In the Ketuvim section of the Tanakh, the book of Nehemiah describes the return of the Israelites to the commandments and to God. Ezra relays to the people the words that God spoke to Moses. Following this reading, the people promise to follow the ways of God. As the experience at Mt Sinai inspired the Israelites to dedicate the altar and consecrate the priests, the Israelites in Ezra's time turn from hearing the commandment to sacrificing and dedicating the Temple and its leaders. In Nehemiah 12:27-47, the people celebrate the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem. They sing songs of thanksgiving and march through the gates of the Old City. Moreover, "on that day, they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced, for God made them rejoice greatly..."<sup>394</sup> Inspired by the words of the revelation, the people rejoice. With sacrifices, they return to God. In the Torah portion, people offer sacrifices to God at the Temple. It is there that God will "meet with the Israelites, and it shall be sanctified (God's) presence."<sup>395</sup> Furthermore, as the people declare their loyalty to the priests in the Torah portion, consecrating them as their leaders, "the people of Judah were grateful to the priests and Levites who were in attendance"<sup>396</sup> at the celebration in Nehemiah. Pairing Exodus 29:35-30:5 with Nehemiah 12:27-47, the

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid. 127.

<sup>394</sup> Nehemiah 12:43.

<sup>395</sup> Exodus 29:43.

<sup>396</sup> Nehemiah 12:44.

two portions together capture the response of a people inspired by revelation. Having heard the commandments, they turn to a place where they can continually meet with God and they proclaim their dedication to the leaders who will serve there.

To continue this emphasis on the inspiration of divine revelation and dedication to the Holy One, one could read Isaiah 61:1-4, 6-11 with Exodus 29:35-46. In the Exodus text, Aaron and his sons become the priests and leaders of the Israelites. They are mediators between the Divine and the individual, offering sacrifices from the Israelites to God. Due to their work, God "will abide among the Israelites" and the Israelites will know that the Eternal is God.<sup>397</sup> Isaiah 61 describes the powerful reality of being one who is appointed by God. As the priests carry out God's commandments in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple, Isaiah describes the process of performing God's commandments in the world outside these holy structures. He says, "the spirit of the Eternal God is in me, the Eternal One has anointed me: to bring hope to the poor, to bring healing to the broken, to proclaim liberty to the enslaved..."<sup>398</sup> And through this leader, the people build a relationship with God. The priests serve as mediators to the Holy One and the prophet views his role in a similar manner. Isaiah will proclaim a time when the people will "be named 'Priest of the Eternal,' and called 'Servant of our God.'"<sup>399</sup> The prophet allows for the people to become the leaders, those with access to God. They are the priests and the servants. Moreover, as the priests were decorated in special attire,<sup>400</sup> the prophet feels clothed in victory, "like a man dressed for his

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<sup>397</sup> Exodus 29:43-45.

<sup>398</sup> Isaiah 61:1-4, 6-11.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid. 61:6.

<sup>400</sup> Exodus 29:29.

wedding...<sup>401</sup> The description of the unique role of a leader and mediator between God and the people in both texts links the passage from Exodus with the passage from Isaiah.

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<sup>401</sup> Isaiah 61:10.

## Chapter 9: Ki Tissa

Many similarities link Ki Tissa and the haftarah portion, 1 Kings 18:1-39. The verbal similarities commence with the shared use of the word *hineh*. In the text of the haftarah, Elijah must inform King Ahab that God will bring rain. In order to reach the king, Elijah finds the king's steward, Obadiah. As Obadiah searches for water, "...Elijah suddenly (*hineh*) confronts him."<sup>402</sup> The *hineh* implies Obadiah's surprise at seeing Elijah, as well as a change in the action of the story. Obadiah stops looking for water and, instead learns that he must go tell his master that Elijah wishes to meet him. In Exodus 32:34, the word *hineh* similarly indicates a moment of transformation within the story. God wishes to punish the people because of their construction of the golden calf. Moses ascends the mountain in an attempt to convince God to forgive the people. In response to Moses' plea, God promises to destroy only those who have sinned against the divine. God then says, "'Go now, lead the people where I told you. See (*hineh*) My angel shall go before you."<sup>403</sup> Surprisingly, though God vows to punish the sinners, he also promises to send an angel before Moses and the people. God converts his anger to forgiveness. Though this transformation is not absolute—God still does punish the people in the following verse—it still affects God's decision not only to harm the Israelites, but protect them. Both texts, therefore, use *hineh* at a moment of transition within the story, which is a common use of this word through out the Tanakh.

The two portions also share the repetition of the word *amah* or answer. As the prophets of Baal attempt to outwit the Israelite prophet, Elijah, and the Israelite God, they

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<sup>402</sup> 1 Kings 18:7.

<sup>403</sup> Exodus 33:34.

invoke the name of Baal. They cry out, "O Baal, answer (*anenu*) us."<sup>404</sup> However, the prophets do not receive a response (*oneh*). In contrast, Elijah speaks these same words. He cries out to the God of Israel, "Answer me, O Eternal, answer me..."<sup>405</sup> But, Elijah does induce a response from God. God demonstrates his power and dedication by setting the altar alight. Though the response to each request is different, the wording is the same. In fact, these passages are connected to an earlier verse in 1 Kings 18. "The words (of Elijah) are identical to the plea uttered by the Baal prophets (v. 26) and in both instances, (they) echo the terms of the test: 'the god who answers by fire, he is God,' as set out in v. 24."<sup>406</sup> The entire test of the haftarah is based on the answering (*anah*) of God. Interestingly, the Torah portion uses the same verb to describe what Moses hears when he comes down from Mt. Sinai to investigate the issue of the golden calf. "It is not the sound of the tune (*anot*) of triumph, or the sound of the tune (*anot*) of defeat; It is the sound of song (*anot*) that I hear."<sup>407</sup> Though the Biblical passage uses the word *anah* to convey a slightly different meaning, the repetition in this text is reminiscent of the repetition in the haftarah portion of this same word.

Another verbal similarity is the use of the word water or *mayim* in multiple places in both the haftarah and Torah portions. In the haftarah, Elijah instructs the people to "fill four jars with water (*mayim*) and pour it over the burnt offering and the wood."<sup>408</sup> Elijah prepares the altar in order to demonstrate the superiority of the Israelite God. God "soaked the altar 'so to increase the miracle.'"<sup>409</sup> God now must set a wet altar on fire

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<sup>404</sup> 1 Kings 18:26.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid. 18:37.

<sup>406</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 443.

<sup>407</sup> Exodus 32:18.

<sup>408</sup> 1 Kings 18:34.

<sup>409</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 443.

instead of a dry one. God succeeds in the task and even sends fire that “licked up the water (*mayim*) that was in the trench (surrounding the altar).”<sup>410</sup> Water plays an important role in this text, allowing for the expansion of God’s miracles. In the Torah portion, water again appears as a significant part of the text. God tells Moses to set a container of water outside the Tent of Meeting so “Aaron and his sons wash their hands and feet from it...they shall wash with water (*mayim*), that they may not die.”<sup>411</sup> The water cleanses and protects the priests before they begin their priestly duties. Thus, in both of these texts, water contributes in a significant way to the progression of the stories.

In addition, the expression *qara b'shem* or “invoking the Eternal by name” or *qara YHWH*, “invoking the name God,” appears in both passages. In 1 Kings, Elijah announces the guidelines of the challenge. The prophets of Baal will invoke the name of their god (*uqratem b'shem eloheichem*) and Elijah will invoke the name of God (*era v'shem YHWH*). Whichever deity responds with fire will be the one God.<sup>412</sup> In Exodus 34:5, Moses meets God upon Mt. Sinai to receive the commandments. At this moment, “The Eternal came down in a cloud; He stood with him there, and proclaimed the name Eternal (*vayira YHWH*).”<sup>413</sup> The parallel expression in the texts of the haftarah and Torah links one passage to the other.

Moreover, the texts both use the niphal form of the verb *ra'ah*. In 1 Kings 18:1-2, God instructs Elijah to “appear (*harei*) before Ahab.”<sup>414</sup> As a result, Elijah “set out to appear (*liharaot*) before Ahab.”<sup>415</sup> In Exodus 34:20, God again instructs a human “to

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<sup>410</sup> 1 Kings 18:39.

<sup>411</sup> Exodus 30:19-20.

<sup>412</sup> 1 Kings 18:24.

<sup>413</sup> Exodus 34:5.

<sup>414</sup> 1 Kings 18:1.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid. 18:2.



appear.” This time, God tells the people that no one “shall appear (*yur'ui*) before Me empty-handed.”<sup>416</sup> The shared use of the identical form of the verb, to appear, links one text to the other.

There is a final similarity in the plea of the leaders to God. Elijah asks God to bring fire upon the altar to demonstrate to the prophet of Baal and to the people of Israel that God is the one God. Elijah says, “O Eternal, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel! Let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant...”<sup>417</sup> Moses speaks these same words, as he asks God to forgive the people. He says, “Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, how You swore to them by Your Self...”<sup>418</sup> Elijah and Moses recite the names of their ancestors. Both use the name “Israel” instead of the name “Jacob,” as is often the case.

The similarities between these two texts are not limited to verbal connections. Several key thematic links join the haftarah and Torah portions. For example, the haftarah and Torah both recount acts of apostasy. In 1 Kings 18, the Israelites waver between worshiping the God of Israel and worshiping Baal. They refuse to be steadfast to one God. Elijah asks them, “How long will you keep hopping between two opinions? If the Eternal is God, follow him; and if Baal, follow him!”<sup>419</sup> Literally, this verse asks, “How long will you keep hopping between two boughs (*siepin*)?” The Hebrew word for boughs can mean “...the boughs of a fruit tree. The image seems to suggest the hopping back and forth between the branches...”<sup>420</sup> Just as a bird may hop between one branch and another of a tree, the people hop between two gods. Evidently, the people’s loyalty

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<sup>416</sup> Exodus 34:20.

<sup>417</sup> 1 Kings 18:36.

<sup>418</sup> Exodus 32:13.

<sup>419</sup> 1 Kings 18:21.

to God is weak. In fact, the text conveys the notion that the Israelites have turned from God. As Elijah pleads to God, he says, "...answer me that this people may know that You, O Eternal, are God: for You have turned their hearts backward."<sup>421</sup> Several commentators disagree on the meaning of this verse. Some claim that the verse conveys that "by His miraculous response to the prayer, God will 'turn' or restore the hearts of the nation to Him..."<sup>422</sup> The people have turned away, but there is hope that God's miracle will return them to God. Another explanation is that God is responsible for the straying of the people. God gave people the evil inclination, so they are able to decide whether or not to follow God.<sup>423</sup> In this case, they chose to reject God and worship another. Either way, the people have clearly turned away from God and towards Baal. They cannot decide which deity to worship.

As the people waver in the haftarah, so too do the Israelites vacillate in the Torah portion. As Moses receives the commandments on Mt. Sinai, the people begin to wonder of his whereabouts. In distress, they turn to Aaron, "'Come, make us a god who shall go before us..."<sup>424</sup> The people donate their precious jewels and build a golden calf. Aaron then creates an altar upon which the people offer sacrifices to celebrate. Though they have recently accepted the commandments, they are "quick to turn aside from the way that (God) enjoined upon them."<sup>425</sup> As the Israelites in the time of Elijah turn from God, the Israelites in the time of Moses turn away as well. They have accepted the Eternal as their God, but now worship another.

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<sup>420</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 439.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid. 18:37.

<sup>422</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 133.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid. 133.

<sup>424</sup> Exodus 32:1.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid. 32:8.

To highlight the people's wayward actions, both texts directly state that the other god, whom the people worship, has become "their" god. As Elijah sets the rules of the challenge with the prophets of Baal, he speaks specifically to the people. He says to them, "'You will then invoke your god by name, and I will invoke the Eternal by name...'"<sup>426</sup> Elijah claims that he will call God's name, while the people call the other deity's name. That second god becomes "your god," the people's god. Even though whom Elijah is addressing in this statement may not be completely clear, Mordechai Cogan writes that it is likely that Elijah identifies "the wayward people with Baal."<sup>427</sup> Similarly, the Israelites directly associate themselves with the golden calf. They say, "'this is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!'"<sup>428</sup> The Israelites in the haftarah and Torah portions do more than just worship another god, for this god becomes their god. This ownership displays the serious nature of the people's departure from God.

Another key link between the texts is that the Torah portion foreshadows the actions of the Israelites in the haftarah portion. After the people construct the golden calf, God reaffirms the covenant with the people and commands them to act in certain ways. God says:

"You must not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for they will lust after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and invite you, and you will eat of their sacrifices. And when you take wives from among their daughters for your sons, their daughters will cause your sons to lust after their gods."<sup>429</sup>

God warns the people not to follow others in their worship of foreign gods. In the haftarah, the Israelites disobey this commandment. The King of Israel, Ahab, has

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<sup>426</sup> 1 Kings 18:24.

<sup>427</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 440.

<sup>428</sup> Exodus 32:4.

married a non-Israelite woman. "She brought into the union strong convictions about her own religion, and soon Baal worship became a common feature of the nation."<sup>430</sup> The people's apostasy comes from their disregard of God's commandment. The non-Israelites in their midst encourage them to worship Baal, and the warning in Exodus comes to pass. This association, therefore, intricately links one portion to the other.

Another remarkable similarity arises from the shared actions of Elijah and Moses. The leaders both attempt to rid the people of the worship of gods other than YHWH. Elijah creates the contest with the prophets of Baal to demonstrate that the God of Israel is the one God. He makes the people vow that they will embrace whichever god "responds with fire."<sup>431</sup> Through this challenge, Elijah convinces the people. They cry out, "The Eternal alone is God. The Eternal alone is God."<sup>432</sup> In a similar manner, Moses tries to destroy the Israelite worship of another god. Through a physical assault on the golden calf, Moses expresses his outrage at the people's wrongdoing. "He took the calf that they had made and burned it; he ground it to powder and strewed it upon the water..."<sup>433</sup> The leaders of the Israelite communities, thus, strive to destroy the wayward actions of the people.

Yet, both leaders do not accomplish this task alone. They both turn to God to confirm that their actions are justified. After Elijah has prepared the altar, he calls to God: "Let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your bidding."<sup>434</sup> Through action, Elijah asks God to

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid. 34:15.

<sup>430</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, The Haftarah Commentary (New York: UAHC Press, 1996), 203.

<sup>431</sup> 1 Kings 18:24.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid. 18:39.

<sup>433</sup> Exodus 32:20.

<sup>434</sup> 1 Kings 18:36.

confirm that he has done what is correct. Likewise, after Moses gathers the people to continue on their journey after the episode of the golden calf, he says to God, “Now, if I have truly gained Your favor, pray let me know Your ways, that I may know You and continue Your favor...”<sup>435</sup> The leaders’ pleas emphasize their partnership with God. They do not act alone, but instead, according to the will of God.

Rabbi Issachar Ya’akovson suggests an additional similarity. In both cases, the communities fear the leaders’ absence. In 1 Kings 18, Obadiah resists bringing Ezekiel’s message to King Ahab due to his concern that Elijah will not be present to support him. He says, “When I leave you, the spirit of the Eternal will carry you off. I don’t know where; and when I come and tell Ahab and he does not find you, he will kill me.”<sup>436</sup> Several commentators provide explanations for Obadiah’s fear. First of all, some commentators say that people attributed supernatural powers to Elijah, since he was a man of God. They believed that he could “travel large distances suddenly.”<sup>437</sup> Others say that Obadiah reacted in this way because “Elijah’s movements had made them accustomed to sudden disappearances to localities unknown to them.”<sup>438</sup> The prospect of Elijah’s disappearance is clearly troubling to Obadiah, regardless of the exact explanation. In a similar manner, the Israelites become concerned when Moses has departed. They question when or if he will return:

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered against Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who shall go before us. For that man Moses, who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him.”<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Exodus 33:13.

<sup>436</sup> 1 Kings 18:12.

<sup>437</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 714.

<sup>438</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992), 370.

<sup>439</sup> Exodus 32:1

In their leader's absence, the Israelites seek to create a new god, in fear that Moses will not return. As in the haftarah portion, the leader's presence is not guaranteed, causing the people concern.<sup>440</sup> Interestingly, Moses himself echoes these fears later in the portion. He says to God, "See, You say to me, 'Lead this people forward,' but you have not made known to me whom you will send with me."<sup>441</sup> Moses fears a lack of direction and leadership. He asks God to send someone with him to lead the people forward. In the absence of this leadership, he too, like Obadiah and the Israelites, becomes afraid.

Several additional minor similarities link the two portions. In 1 Kings 18:20, Elijah gathers the people around Mt. Carmel.<sup>442</sup> In Exodus 31 and 32, Moses ascends Mt. Sinai to receive the commandments. The events at these mountains are central to the plot of both texts. Moreover, the covenant with God is renewed in the haftarah and Torah portions. The people say, "'The Eternal alone is God, The Eternal alone is God!'"<sup>443</sup> After witnessing God's powerful display in the haftarah, they devote themselves to God. In Exodus, it is Moses who reaffirms the relationship between God and the Israelites. He begs God to forgive the people for their mistakes.<sup>444</sup> In the end, God instructs Moses to create a new tablet for the commandments.<sup>445</sup> It is evident, therefore, that the covenantal relationship between God and the people remains.

Though there are differences within the two portions, they appear less significant in comparison to the similarities. Elijah and Moses urge the people to follow one God. Yet, their methods of persuasion are quite different. Elijah seeks a miracle from God to

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<sup>440</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 220.

<sup>441</sup> Exodus 33:12.

<sup>442</sup> 1 Kings 18:20.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.* 18:39.

<sup>444</sup> Exodus 32:31-32.

demonstrate to the people that the Eternal is the only God. He creates an elaborate challenge to prove this idea. Moses, on the other hand, responds to the people's act of apostasy by destroying the god, which the people had created. He does not thoughtfully construct a plan to return the people to God. Instead, he "became enraged...hurled the tablets from his hands...(and) too the calf that they had made and burned it..."<sup>446</sup> Elijah and Moses seek to convince the people of a similar notion. Yet, their methods in approaching this task greatly differ.

Another area in which the two portions may diverge is the reality of the object of the people's worship. In the haftarah portion, the people vacillate between their devotion to God and their devotion to Baal. They actually worship, what they believe to be, another deity.<sup>447</sup> In the Torah portion, though, commentators disagree on whether the Israelites perceive the calf as a god or just a leader. The people do say to Aaron "make us a god who shall go before us."<sup>448</sup> Nevertheless, they provide a clear reason for this request. They "'do not know what has happened to him (Moses).'"<sup>449</sup> Possibly, the people wish to create the golden calf to replace their leader, not to replace their God. Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson refers to the opinion of Ramban. He writes, "It was not at all the intention of the people to perceive the calf as an actual pagan God symbol, in opposition to the worship of Ba'al in the time of Elijah."<sup>450</sup> If the people are replacing Moses and not replacing God, their actions do not equal the actions of the Israelites who worship Baal. In this case, the haftarah would differ from the Torah portion.

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid. 34:1.

<sup>446</sup> Exodus 32:19-20.

<sup>447</sup> 1 Kings 18:21.

<sup>448</sup> Exodus 32:1.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid. 32:1.

<sup>450</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989) 219.

There are some remarkable similarities between the haftarah and Torah portions. Specifically, the actions of the Israelites and the responses of the leaders correspond remarkably. A discussion addressing that which draws people away from God is as relevant now as it was in the time of the Tanakh. Whether the cause of straying is a lack of leadership, the appeal of a foreign god, the appeal of a culture of materialism or other distractions, Jews today struggle with the challenge of loyalty to God, just as we did in the past. Therefore, the haftarah and Torah portions for Ki Tissa serve as exceptional complements for each other.



## Chapter 10: Vayakhel

The Torah portion Vayakhel, Exodus 35:1-38:20, has much in common with the haftarah portion, 1 Kings 7:40-50. Like previous texts, these passages are related both verbally and thematically. In 1 Kings 7:40-50, the reader learns about the fixtures of the Temple and about those who created these fixtures. Hiram, a man whom the text introduces in the previous portion as a coppersmith, constructs “the lavers, the scrapers and the sprinkling bowls”<sup>451</sup> for the Temple. The lavers or pots “were used for carrying away the suet from the altar.”<sup>452</sup> The scrapers or shovels helped in “removing the ashes of the sacrificed animals from the altar.”<sup>453</sup> And, the basins were “for the ritual sprinkling of blood.”<sup>454</sup> In Exodus 38, the text mentions these same items as part of the inventory of the Tabernacle. Bezalel, the builder, “made all the utensils of the altar—the pots, the scrapers, the basins...”<sup>455</sup> This verbal connection links one text to the other.

As the listing of items in the Temple and Tabernacle continues, so do the verbal similarities. In 1 Kings 7:49, one hears of the “lamp stands (*haminorot*) of pure gold that stood in front of the inner Sanctuary, five on the right and five on the left, with their gold (*zahav*) flowers, lamps, and tongs...”<sup>456</sup> Interestingly, the Torah only mentions this lamp stand one time,<sup>457</sup> in the Torah portion for Vayakhel. “He made the lamp stand (*haminorah*) of pure gold (*zahav*)...”<sup>458</sup> The one reference to this item in the Torah comes in correlation with the reference in this haftarah portion. Not only do the two texts tell of the lamp stand, but also of the material of which it is made, gold.

<sup>451</sup> 1 Kings 7:40.

<sup>452</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 267.

<sup>453</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1996), 217.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid. 217.

<sup>455</sup> Exodus 38:3.

<sup>456</sup> 1 Kings 7:49.

<sup>457</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1996), 219.

The two passages both use another metal, bronze or *nihoshet*. The items, which Hiram constructs, are of bronze. "All those vessels in the House of the Eternal that Hiram made (*asah*) for King Solomon were of burnished bronze (*n'hoshet*)."<sup>459</sup> Likewise, Bezalel creates many items which he makes from bronze. "He made (*vayas*) horns for it (the altar) on its four corners, the horns being of one piece with it; and he overlaid it with copper (*n'hoshet*)."<sup>460</sup> Hiram and Bezalel make (*asah* or *vayas*) items of bronze (*n'hoshet*). This verbal overlapping links both texts.

The haftarah and Torah portions both describe the products of Hiram and Bezalel's work. These two characters are similar in their work, but also in their basic skills. Hiram "was endowed with skill, ability, and knowledge for executing all work in bronze" or "vayimalai et hahochmah v'et hat'vunah v'et hada'at l'asot kol milechet b'n'hoshet."<sup>461</sup> Exodus uses this same phrase to describe Bezalel. Moses tells that people that God "has endowed him (Bezalel) with...skill, ability and knowledge in every kind of craft" or "vayimalai oto...b'hochma b't'vunah u'v'da'at u'v'chol m'lacha."<sup>462</sup> The descriptions of Hiram and Bezalel's skills are remarkably similar.<sup>463</sup> Though, the reader learns of Hiram's talent in a passage prior to 1 Kings 7:40, Hiram's role in the haftarah portion connects this previous text to 1 Kings 7:40-50.

A final verbal similarity comes from a possible scribal error. 1 Kings 7:45 tells of bronze vessels that Hiram had made. "All those (*ha'eleh*) vessels in the House of the

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<sup>458</sup> Exodus 37:17.

<sup>459</sup> 1 Kings 7:45.

<sup>460</sup> Exodus 38:2.

<sup>461</sup> 1 Kings 7:14.

<sup>462</sup> Exodus 35:31.

<sup>463</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 138.

Eternal that Hiram made for King Solomon were of burnished bronze."<sup>464</sup> Yet, earlier manuscripts included the word *ha'ohel* or tent, not *ha'eleh* or these. A scribe could have easily inverted the letters *hay* and *lamed*. However, some commentators provide a different explanation. They claim that the error may result from "a scribe whose mind wandered to the Tabernacle, where the implements were in service, causing him to write *ohel* for *eleh*."<sup>465</sup> The presence of *ohel* in the haftarah text links it to the Torah portion, which describes the tabernacle and *ohelo* or its tent.<sup>466</sup> Though one cannot be certain of the explanation for this inversion, the mistake may serve as an even stronger link between the passages.

The most prominent thematic connection between the haftarah and Torah portions is the inventory of items in the Temple and Tabernacle, respectively. Both texts provide a detailed list describing the utensils, structures, and other materials within the buildings. The haftarah portion consists exclusively of this recounting. In 1 Kings 7:41, we learn that Hiram made "the two columns, the two globes of the capitals upon the columns; and the two pieces of network to cover the two globes..."<sup>467</sup> At a later point, the portion describes how "Solomon made all the furnishings that were in the House of the Eternal: the altar of the gold; the able for the bread of display of gold; the lamp stands...in the front of the shrines..."<sup>468</sup> In a similar matter, parts of the Exodus text list the work of Bezalel and the Israelites. "They made bars of acacia wood...they made the center bar to run, halfway up the plans..."<sup>469</sup> Then, Bezalel makes "the ark of acacia wood...the lamp

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<sup>464</sup> 1 Kings 7:45.

<sup>465</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 269.

<sup>466</sup> Exodus 35:11.

<sup>467</sup> 1 Kings 7:41.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid. 7:48-49.

<sup>469</sup> Exodus 36:31-33.

stand of pure gold... (and) the incense altar..."<sup>470</sup> Evidently, both passages chronicle the making of these items as essential components of the Temple and Tabernacle.

Another significant connection between the haftarah and Torah portions is the shared description of space. Both texts illustrate how certain materials belong in certain areas of the buildings. These materials designate the importance of that area. In 1 Kings 7, Hiram constructs the Temple items that are made of bronze.<sup>471</sup> The text then says that King Solomon created the items that are made of gold.<sup>472</sup> The bronze materials belong in the outer areas of the Temple, while the gold ones belong in the inner sanctums:

In contrast to the bronze vessels and implements manufactured for use in the courtyard and on the altar in front of the Temple, those intended for use within the Temple itself were made from or covered with gold. The metals themselves indicated gradations of holiness.<sup>473</sup>

In the Temple, the items constructed of less valuable metal were situated in the outer parts of the Temple. In contrast, the items of gold were in the holiest places of the Temple. A similar pattern appears in the Torah portion in relation to the Tabernacle. Bezalel constructs an enclosure for the Tabernacle. "All the hangings around the enclosure were of fine twisted linen. The sockets for the posts were of copper, the hooks and bands of the post were of silver..."<sup>474</sup> Silver and copper line the outside of the Tabernacle. As in the haftarah, gold fills the inside and more holy parts of the structure. "Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood... he overlaid it with pure gold, inside and out; and he made a gold molding for it round about..."<sup>475</sup> The two texts describe how the inner areas of the Temple and the Tabernacle are more holy than the outer areas. Furthermore,

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid. 37:1, 17, 25.

<sup>471</sup> 1 Kings 7:45.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid. 7:48-50.

<sup>473</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, The Jewish Study Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 689.

the passages set a clear distinction between the areas with a change in the value of medal used to construct the different parts.

As in the verbal connections, the work of Hiram and Bezalel is not the only similar attribute between them. In addition, the descriptions of the individuals are quite alike. As previously mentioned, the two artisans share similar skills. Interestingly, they also share a similar ancestry. In 1 Kings 7:14, King Solomon sends for Hiram who was “the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali and his father had been a Tyrian...”<sup>476</sup>

However, this passage is not the only one to describe Hiram’s genealogy. In 2 Chronicles 2:12, Solomon will work with Hiram “the son of a Danite woman, his father a Tyrian...” Though 2 Chronicles provides a different spelling of the name, Hiram, the rabbis believed the text described the same person as in 1 Kings 7:14. Therefore, Hiram is a son of a Danite woman, not a woman from the tribe of Naphtali.<sup>477</sup> The haftarah portion includes another individual responsible for building the items in the Temple, Solomon. “And Solomon made all the furnishings that were in the House of the Eternal...”<sup>478</sup> King Solomon is a Judean.<sup>479</sup> This genealogy corresponds with the genealogy in the Torah portion. In Exodus 35:30, Moses introduces Bezalel to the community. He says “See, the Eternal has singled out by name Bezalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.”<sup>480</sup> Like Solomon, Bezalel is a Judahite. His assistant, who also builds the items in the Tabernacle, is Oholiab. Oholiab is a “son of Ahisamach

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<sup>474</sup> Exodus 38:16-17.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid. 37:1-2.

<sup>476</sup> 1 Kings 7:14.

<sup>477</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002). 136.

<sup>478</sup> 1 Kings 7:48.

<sup>479</sup> Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002). 136.

<sup>480</sup> Exodus 35:30.

of the tribe of Dan...<sup>481</sup> If Hiram's mother is from the tribe of Dan, he shares an ancestry with Oholiab. As a result, the workers who build the Temple and the Tabernacle are from the same two tribes: Dan and Judah. Therefore, "Rabbinic tradition preferred the genealogy in Chronicles, thereby establishing a typology between the artisans of the Tabernacle and the Temple."<sup>482</sup>

Despite these similarities, several differences distinguish the two portions. Hiram and Bezalel have similar skills to build the Temple and the Tabernacle. Yet, the text does not attribute Hiram's talent to anyone specifically, while the Torah text attributes Bezalel's talent to God. 1 Kings explains that Hiram "was endowed with skill, ability and knowledge for executing all work in bronze."<sup>483</sup> The passage does not say explicitly who endowed Hiram with this ability. In contrast, the Torah portion specifically states that God is responsible for Bezalel's skill. "The Eternal has singled out by name Bezalel... (and) endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft..."<sup>484</sup> The Torah text emphasizes the role that God plays in instilling ability as a craftsman within Bezalel. Though Hiram's talent may have emerged also through this path, the text does not tell the reader so directly.

Another clear contrast between the two texts is the level of communal participation in the building of the structures. The haftarah portion tells of Hiram's work and of Solomon's.<sup>485</sup> The text does not attribute the craftsmanship to any other individual. Yet, the Torah portion speaks of many artisans who assisted in the creation of

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid. 35:34.

<sup>482</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002). 136.

<sup>483</sup> 1 Kings 7:14.

<sup>484</sup> Exodus 35:30-31.

<sup>485</sup> 1 Kings 7:40-47; 1 Kings 7:48-50.

the Tabernacle. Moses instructs the Israelites to "...let all among you who are skilled come and make all that the Eternal has commanded: the Tabernacle, its tent and its covering..."<sup>486</sup> Even though the text distinguishes the work of Bezalel and Oholiab, this distinction does not preclude other workers. Moses emphasizes their participation in the process of building the Tabernacle. The Exodus passage reemphasizes this reality in a later part. "Let, then, Bezalel and Oholiab and all the skilled persons whom the Eternal has endowed with skill..."<sup>487</sup> Any skilled individual can participate in this process. The text clearly states that there are others "whom the Eternal has endowed with skill." God has instilled within these individuals the ability to craft the Tabernacle. Yet, as stated above, the text does not even state that Hiram receives this gift from God. Evidently, the additional participants in the construction of the parts of the Tabernacle play a significant role, as divinely endowed individuals. Unlike in the haftarah portion where Hiram and Solomon exclusively complete the work, in the Torah portion many skilled individuals contribute.

Another difficulty arises with the association of these two texts because many of the similarities between the two are found in a different haftarah portion. For instance, both the descriptions of Hiram's genealogy and of his skill come in an earlier text, 1 Kings 7:14. These are two of the main similarities that join the haftarah portion to the Torah portion. Though one may bring knowledge of this former passage to the reading of the haftarah, many may be unaware of the connection. As a result, an alternative haftarah should be suggested. In this case, the most obvious choice would be the Sephardic choice for a haftarah with Vayakhel, 1 Kings 7:13-26. This portion would then include

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<sup>486</sup> Exodus 35:10.

<sup>487</sup> Exodus 36:1.

Hiram's ancestry and the list of Hiram's skills. Moreover, several of the key verbal connections between 1 Kings 7:40-50 and Exodus 35:1-38:20, exist within 1 Kings 7:13-26, as well. In 1 Kings 7:15, the text describes Hiram's work in bronze. "He cast two columns of bronze (*n'hoshet*)..."<sup>488</sup> Just as Bezalel works in copper (*n'hoshet*), Hiram uses this same metal. Additionally, Hiram "vaya'as et ha'yam" or "made the tank,"<sup>489</sup> just as Bezalel *vaya'as et ha'aharon* or "made the ark."<sup>490</sup>

However, this possible replacement text only discusses the bronze work, and not the work in gold. Therefore, the sense of gradation in spatial sanctity as evidenced through the gradation of metal, would not be present in the haftarah, though it is present in the Torah portion.

The haftarah portion also contains some similarities with another Torah portion, Terumah. In 1 Kings 7:48-49, the text tells of the "table for the bread of display" and "the lampstands...in front of the shrine,"<sup>491</sup> both made of gold. The Torah portion also describes a table, but in much greater detail. "You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it."<sup>492</sup> Mordechai Cogan proposes that "the dimensions and construction of the table in the Tabernacle may reflect the table of the Temple."<sup>493</sup> Similarly, he states that the lamp stand in the haftarah may relate to the lamp stand in the Torah. "You shall make a lamp stand of pure gold; the lamp stand shall be made of

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<sup>488</sup> 1 Kings 7:15.

<sup>489</sup> 1 Kings 7:23.

<sup>490</sup> Exodus 37:1.

<sup>491</sup> 1 Kings 7:48-49.

<sup>492</sup> Exodus 25:23-24.

<sup>493</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 269.



hammered work..."<sup>494</sup> Like the table, "the single lamp stand of the Tabernacle... may have been modeled on the Temple candelabrum..."<sup>495</sup>

Interestingly, as the haftarah portion could be paired with the Torah portion, Terumah, an alternative haftarah portion for Terumah could be paired with this Torah portion, Vayakhel. One suggestion for an alternative haftarah portion for Terumah was the poem, "The Portrait of An Artist" by Moyshe Leib Halpern, a Yiddish writer in American at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the Torah portion describes the artisans of the Tabernacle, Bezalel and all the skilled Israelites, this poem describes one person's unique contributions to this world. "The eagle has his mighty wings, behold I have my mighty arms!"<sup>496</sup> In the Torah portion, "everyone who excelled in ability and everyone whose spirit moved him came, bringing to the Eternal his offering for the work of the Tent of Meeting."<sup>497</sup> Each person contributes his/her unique gift or skill. Just as the narrator of the poem may not dance "but with a heart that hammers out (his) song, (he) sings as (he) please(s)... (and) the world hops to (his) liturgies,"<sup>498</sup> the Israelites bring what they can and contribute what they are able to the Tent of Meeting. The community, in turn, benefits from these gifts of both material objects and personal ability.

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<sup>494</sup> Exodus 25:31.

<sup>495</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 269.

<sup>496</sup> Moyshe Leib Halpern, "Portrait of the Artist" *Selected Poems: A.M. Klein (Collected Works of A.M. Klein)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 795.

<sup>497</sup> Exodus 35:21.

<sup>498</sup> Moyshe Leib Halpern, "Portrait of the Artist" *Selected Poems: A.M. Klein (Collected Works of A.M. Klein)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 795.

## Chapter 11: Pikudei

The final Torah portion in the Book of Exodus, Pikudei, Exodus 38:1-40:38, corresponds with the haftarah portion 1 Kings 7:51-8:21. There are several significant verbal similarities between the two texts. In the haftarah, Solomon completes the building of the Temple and the people celebrate with a festival. The priests and Levites bring several important items up to the Temple. They “carried up the Ark of the Eternal (*aron*). Then the priests and the Levites brought (*vayis'u vava*) the Tent of Meeting (*ohel moed*) and all the holy vessels (*klei*) that were in the Tent.”<sup>499</sup> Interestingly, the Israelites bring forth remarkably similar items in the Torah portion. They “brought (*vavinu*) the Tabernacle to Moses, with the Tent (*haohel*) and all its vessels (*calav*)...the Ark (*aron*) of the Pact and its poles (*badav*)...all the vessels (*klei*) of the service of the Tabernacle to the Tent of Meeting (*ohel moed*).”<sup>500</sup> The Israelites bring the same items that the priests and Levites bring to the Temple: the tent, the Ark, the vessels. Both texts even mention the poles of the Ark. The Torah portion does so in this sequence, while the haftarah describes their length and visibility at a later point.<sup>501</sup> Evidently, the nearly identical language in the portions clearly links one text to the other.

Another verbal similarity that links the two passages is the use of the word *va'yivarech* or “bless.” After the priests and Levites have deposited the sacred items in the Temple, they reemerge. At this moment, as the presence of God fills the Temple, Solomon blesses the people of Israel. “Then, with the whole congregation of Israel standing, the king faced about and blessed (*vayivarech*) the whole congregation of

<sup>499</sup> 1 Kings 8:4.

<sup>500</sup> Exodus 39:33-40.

<sup>501</sup> 1 Kings 8:8.

Israel...<sup>502</sup> Similarly, after the people have brought the items into the Tabernacle and Aaron and his sons perform the priestly rituals, "Moses blessed (*vayivarech*) them."<sup>503</sup> At this celebration of the completion of the Temple and the Tabernacle, the leaders bless the people.

The mention of the "Presence of the Eternal" in the haftarah provides another link between the two portions. As the people complete the work of the Temple, a cloud (*anan*) fills (*malai*) the Temple. The cloud represents "the Presence of the Eternal (*kevod Adonai*) (that) filled (*malai*) the House of the Eternal..."<sup>504</sup> God is present in the Temple that the people have created. Again, the language of Exodus echoes these words. As soon as Moses completes the work, "the cloud (*heanan*) covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of the Eternal (*chivod Adonai*) filled (*malai*) the Tabernacle."<sup>505</sup> The sequence of events in the haftarah verbally parallels the sequence of events in the Torah portion.

The unique similarities between the haftarah and Torah portions do not cease with the verbal links. In addition, key themes join the two texts. These haftarah and Torah portions chronicle the completion of the building of the Temple and the Tabernacle. The Israelite communities finally have an earthly dwelling for God. The haftarah begins with the words, "When all the work that King Solomon had done in the House of the Eternal was completed..."<sup>506</sup> The Torah portion ends with a similar description. "When Moses

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<sup>502</sup> Ibid. 8:14.

<sup>503</sup> Exodus 39:43.

<sup>504</sup> 1 Kings 8:10-11.

<sup>505</sup> Exodus 40:34.

<sup>506</sup> 1 Kings 7:51.

had finished the work...<sup>507</sup> The two texts signify the end of the period of construction and the beginning of the period of avodah, or worship.

The completions of the two structures do not only parallel one another, they are also inherently linked. Two of the items that the priests and Levites bring to the Temple are the Ark and the Tent of Meeting.<sup>508</sup> Some commentators claim that this Tent is the exact tent that the Israelites carried in the desert.<sup>509</sup> Thus, the Israelites are physically including in the Temple the work of the Israelites in the desert, the work that is completed in this Torah portion. Solomon even directly refers to this connection at the end of the portion. He says, "I have build the House for the name of the Eternal, the God of Israel; and I have set a place there for the Ark, containing the covenant which the Eternal made with our fathers when he brought them out from the land of Egypt."<sup>510</sup> Solomon creates a direct link between the contents of the Temple and the Israelites who wandered in the desert. Even if this act did not occur, the fact that the author probably believed that it did and included the unification of the Tent of Meeting, in which are the Ark and covenant that the Israelites received in the wilderness, and the Temple, demonstrates the strong correlation between the two.

Another part of the text provides a link between the contents of the Temple and the generation of the Israelites in the wilderness. In 1 Kings 8:9, the author writes, "There was nothing inside the Ark but the two tablets of stone which Moses placed there at Horeb..."<sup>511</sup> The Torah portion describes this exact moment when Moses puts the

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<sup>507</sup> Exodus 40:33.

<sup>508</sup> 1 Kings 8:4.

<sup>509</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992), 392.

<sup>510</sup> 1 Kings 8:20-21.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid. 8:9.

tablets in the Ark. "He took the Pact and placed it in the ark..."<sup>512</sup> Thus, the haftarah text directly refers to Moses' action in the Torah.<sup>513</sup> Yet, some commentators disagree with this understanding. Mordechai Cogan argues that the use of the word "Horeb" to describe Sinai, is typical of the Deuteronomic tradition. As a result, the text may refer to Deuteronomy 10:1-5, where God instructs Moses to place the second set of tablets in the Ark,<sup>514</sup> not to the Exodus text. Or, it may refer to Exodus 25:16. In this text, God tells Moses to "deposit in the Ark [the tablets of] the Pact which I will give you."<sup>515</sup> Though this haftarah may have specific similarities with other portions, these similarities do not diminish the links between the haftarah and Torah for the portion Pikudei. When one reads the two together, the link between the recounting of Moses' act as he places the tablets in the ark in the haftarah and the actual happening of this event in the Torah portion unites the two texts.

A final parallel between the haftarah and Torah portions occurs at the moment where the cloud covers the Temple and the Tabernacle. Because the cloud fills the Temple in the haftarah, "the priests were not able to remain and perform the service..."<sup>516</sup> The priests must cease their service to God until the cloud departs. Likewise, Moses remains outside the Tabernacle because of the cloud. In a similar way, "...the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of the Eternal filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it..."<sup>517</sup> Moses cannot dwell in the Tent of Meeting while the cloud is upon it. As a result, the

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<sup>512</sup> Exodus 40:20.

<sup>513</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 144.

<sup>514</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 280.

<sup>515</sup> Exodus 25:15.

<sup>516</sup> 1 Kings 8:11.

<sup>517</sup> Exodus 40:34-35.

Presence of God, as represented by the cloud, prevents the priests, in the haftarah portion, and Moses, in the Torah portion, from entering the structures.<sup>518</sup>

There are several differences, which are also significant to consider. First of all, there are key distinctions between a permanent Temple and a transportable Tabernacle. As mentioned in the discussion of previous portions, the Temple stands continuously as a structure in which the priests sacrifice to God. In contrast, the Tabernacle is transformed each time the Israelites move through the desert, as the people build it and fractionate it:

The difference between a movable and permanent Shrine evokes different spiritual realms—the one of dynamic and changing circumstances, in accordance with the symbolism of religious life as a journey; and the other of static and dependable stability, in accordance with the symbolism of religiosity directed toward a sacred center.<sup>519</sup>

The static versus the changing realms represent alternative forms of worship and alternative definitions of religion. Yet, these differences seem minor when Solomon brings together the two structures in the haftarah. At that moment, “Solomon symbolically joins these two realities in the mind of the reader...”<sup>520</sup> Though there are differences between the Temple and Tabernacle, by including the Tabernacle as a part of the Temple, these differences fade. Instead, the two structures each become a component of one unified whole.

Additional parts of the haftarah text differentiate it from the Torah portion. The haftarah, in several instances, relates to alternative Torah portions. In 1 Kings 8:8, the author of the haftarah describes the poles of the Ark. When the priests place the Ark in its central location in the Temple, “The poles projected so that the ends of the poles were

<sup>518</sup> Rabbi Issachar Ya'akovson, *Hazon HaMikra* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1989), 230.

<sup>519</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 146.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.* 146.

visible in the sanctuary and in the front of the Shrine, but they could not be seen outside; and there they remain to this day."<sup>521</sup> The poles, therefore, are a permanent fixture of the Ark. God demands the permanence of the poles in Exodus 25:15, in the portion Terumah. God says, "The poles shall not be removed from it (the ark of the Tabernacle)."<sup>522</sup> In that same portion, a verbal similarity links this text to the haftarah. In 1 Kings 8:8, as the author describes the poles, he writes, "...the poles were visible in the sanctuary (*hakodesh*) in front of the Shrine..."<sup>523</sup> The sanctuary, or *hakodesh*, is the "outer sanctuary...the main hall of the Temple."<sup>524</sup> In Exodus, as God describes the materials and parts of the Temple, God says, "...the curtain shall serve you as a partition between the Holy (*hakodesh*) and the Holy of Holies."<sup>525</sup> The two texts both use the term, *hakodesh*, to describe the outer sanctuary of the Temple. The verbal overlap brings together this haftarah portion and the Torah portion, Terumah.

One additional Torah portion relates thematically to this haftarah text. Just as the haftarah for Pikudei describes the cloud which covers the Temple, Exodus 20:18, Yitro, describes God's presence in a similar cloud. "So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was."<sup>526</sup> This is no ordinary cloud, but the unique cloud in which the divine presence resides and which descends before the people.<sup>527</sup> This cloud and its significance link the two texts.

Though these similarities connect the haftarah portion to additional Torah portions, their limited number does not provide a strong enough link to change the Torah

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<sup>521</sup> 1 Kings 8:8.

<sup>522</sup> Exodus 25:15.

<sup>523</sup> 1 Kings 8:8.

<sup>524</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 280.

<sup>525</sup> Exodus 26:33.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.* 20:18.

<sup>527</sup> Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1992), 393.

portion with which this haftarah is read. The key verbal similarities between the haftarah and Torah reading for Pikudei; the completion of work on the holy structures; the joining of the Temple and the Tabernacle; God's presence in the cloud; and the placement of the tablets in the ark in both texts significantly link the one to the other. The connection between the two nullifies the need for an alternative haftarah reading. Moreover, both texts speak of a topic that is relevant to modern Jews today: the completion of a human-made structure, in which people hope to find God. These two texts, therefore, can foster important and relevant questions. Where do we find God? Can God be contained in a building? Is the synagogue the only place to pray to God or to serve God? Moreover, as the texts bring together the Temple and the Tabernacle, one might reflect on the ways in which we can join past practices of Judaism with the present practices. How can we incorporate Hassidic niggunim in the liturgy of our service to build kavannah? How can immersing ourselves in a body of water correspond with the tradition of visiting a mikveh for purposes of purification? How can the Talmud, an essential Jewish text that many modern Jews have rejected, still guide our lives and our Jewish practices? The same questions which arise in the haftarah and Torah portions of Pikudei are relevant to our lives today.

It is essential in the discussion of Pikudei to also mention the combined reading of Vayakhel and Pikudei, which occurs on every year except for the Hebrew leap year. The haftarah portion matched with the combined reading of these two portions is I Kings 7:51-8:21, which is also the haftarah of Pikudei on its own. When one reads the two portions together with this haftarah, though, one sees additional similarities.



For instance, the haftarah portion describes the assembly of Solomon and the people at the Temple. During this moment, the author refers to the people as “the whole community (*adat*) of Israel.”<sup>528</sup> Gunther Plaut acknowledges that this word “describes the people as a religious community.”<sup>529</sup> The people gather together to witness the completion of the Temple. They are joined as a nation, but also as a religious group. The text of the Torah portion Vayakhel includes this same word after the Israelites have heard God’s declarations. God instructs them to construct the vessels of the Temple. Afterwards, “the whole community (*adat*) of the Israelites left Moses’ presence.”<sup>530</sup> As witnesses to God’s commandments, the people become a religious community, *adat*. They become like the Israelites who stand at the dedication of the Temple.

Another verbal similarity between the haftarah portion and Vayakhel is the use of the verb, *vayakhel*. When Solomon completes his work on the Temple, he “convoked (*vayakhel*) the elders of Israel...to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Eternal from the City of David...”<sup>531</sup> Solomon assembles the leaders of the Israelites to join the Ark and the Temple. Moses also gathers together the people. The first line of the Torah portion incorporates this same verb, which also explains how the portion received its name. “Moses then convoked (*vayakhel*) the whole Israelites community and said to them...”<sup>532</sup> With the addition of the reading of Vayakhel, more verbal similarities join the haftarah and Torah portions.

Thematically, the additional portion also relates to the text of the haftarah. In 1 Kings 8:6, “the priests brought the Ark of the Eternal’s Covenant to its place underneath

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<sup>528</sup> 1 Kings 8:5.

<sup>529</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (New York: UAHC Press, 1996), 224.

<sup>530</sup> Exodus 35:20.

<sup>531</sup> 1 Kings 8:1.

the wings of the cherubim, in the Shrine of the House, in the Holy of Holies.”<sup>533</sup> The Ark has a specific place within the Temple, under the wing of the cherubim. This description corresponds with Exodus 37:1-9. “The Ark was constructed according to the divine model brought by Moses from Sinai.”<sup>534</sup> In Exodus 37:6-9, the text describes the details of the cherubim, which in the Temple will later shield the Ark. “He (Bezalel) made two cherubim of gold... The cherubim had their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings...”<sup>535</sup> The presence of the cherubim, protecting the Ark, unites the passages in the haftarah and Torah portions.

As a result, when one reads the Torah portions Pikudei and Vayakhel together, there are additional links between the texts of the haftarah and Torah. Though these additions may not contribute as strongly to new modern understandings, they certainly heighten the relevance of the joint readings of these portions.

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<sup>532</sup> Exodus 35:1.

<sup>533</sup> 1 Kings 8:6.

<sup>534</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings (Anchor Bible)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 279.

<sup>535</sup> Exodus 37:6-9.

## Conclusion

I began this thesis with several concerns about studying the haftarah portions. For one, I was not an English major and have always had only a limited interest in analyzing poetic form and structure. Since a number of the haftarah portions are from the Prophets section of the Tanakh, I was concerned that my thesis would transform into a larger literary analysis of the haftarot. Moreover, I had my hesitations about suggesting alternative haftarot. Who was I to accomplish this task? And, where would I even begin to find relevant, significant, and interesting texts that could fill the spaces left by the original haftarah portions?

Before I even began the research for this thesis, I had hastily dismissed most of the portions as quite elusive for modern audiences. I believed that the combination of the language, the style of writing, and the message would prevent individuals, including myself, from forming a true connection to the text. While studying the haftarah in depth, though, I gained an appreciation of the haftarot that I did not necessarily expect.

What I found, in analyzing the original texts, as well as in searching for new texts, was a greater understanding of the haftarah portions that Jews have read for years. I suggested many alternative haftarot that I hoped would be more accessible to modern audiences. But as I completed this process, I realized that the new texts shed light on the old texts as much as they brought new meaning to the Torah portions. One example of this reality comes with the Torah portion, Shemot. I included a text from *The Women's Passover Companion* as a possible alternative to the Isaiah passage. This modern text addressed the question: why did God not respond to the Israelites' until the middle of the portion? Yet, in reexamining the haftarah, I found that the Isaiah text itself seems to

address this very issue. The entire portion, in fact, focuses on God's attention towards the people of Israel. Though this attention is not always positive—God certainly reprimands the people—this attention is consistently present. God is constantly paying attention to the people.

Likewise, with Tetzaveh, I found myself searching for a new text that would parallel the Torah portion's emphasis on Divine inspiration and revelation as an impetus for building a holy structure for God. Yet, along the way I realized the importance of context in this process. I turned to the Nehemiah text, where the people hear the words of the Torah from Ezra and then pledge their loyalty to God. I wondered, is this readiness to embrace God truly absent from the original haftarah? I discovered that the Israelites in the haftarah portion were also seeking a connection with God. For them, though, this connection could not necessarily be effected until God had forgiven them for their wrongdoings, and gathered them in from the exile: their punishment for their sins. As such, their construction of a temple was motivated by their need for a new relation with the Divine. However, they could not move forward with this process while still living under the burden of their sins.

Therefore, through the new texts, I found answers in the old texts that I did not necessarily know were there. Though it might seem that my insight makes the search for alternative haftarot unnecessary—why do we need an alternative if the original text deals with modern concerns—I would argue that reading a new haftarah with the traditional haftarah, or reading the traditional haftarah one year and an alternative another, could shed light on both portions. A modern or alternative reading more accesible to a modern

audience could open the door for Jews to find meaning and inspiration in the traditional texts.

My original intention in writing this thesis clearly transformed during the process of researching and constructing this paper. Instead of moving away from the traditional texts, I gained a greater appreciation of them. And, instead of perceiving the suggestions of alternative haftarot as a burden too large, I began to view it as an opportunity to bridge tradition and modernity. And that truly encapsulates how I view my role and my vision as a future rabbi and as a Reform Jew.

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## Appendix

### Shemot Translation Pg. 144-145 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

There are different explanations with which one may elucidate the selection of the excerpts from which this haftarah has been put together. It is possible that one word, which appears in the beginning of the parasha and the beginning of the haftarah, influenced the choice of the first excerpt, which has in it at one and the same time an element of parallelism and an element of juxtaposition. Parashat Shemot, with which the second book of the Torah begins, opens with the sentence, "These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt, with Jacob, each with his household." And the haftarah begins with the words, "In days to come Jacob shall strike root, Israel shall sprout and blossom, And the face of the world shall be filled with fruit." Here (in the Torah), "the ones who come," are the children of Yaakov. But, here (in the haftarah), they are "the days to come." Here (the Torah) relates to us the beginning of the history of the people, about the descent to Egypt, the enslavement to a foreign people, and the first exile. And here it speaks about the return of those who are in exile from the nations of their dispersion, a new taking in of the land of their birth, and the great plenty that descended upon the entire world and all the fullness thereof: "And the face of the earth will be filled with fruit."

The author of "Sefer Mat'amim" points out, among other things, two contacting points between the parashah and haftarah. In the parashah, (the texts) speaks about the expected punishment for Egypt because of their refusal to release Israel, as follows (Exodus 3: 19-20): "Yet I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no because of

a mighty hand. So I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with various wonders which I will work upon them; after that he shall let you go.” And, also in the haftarah we find an allusion to the punishment that brought God to the Egyptians in the words of the written verse, in the form of a question (Isaiah 27:7): “Has he struck them down as he struck down those who struck them?” And the Metsudat David explains “And did he indeed beat him with cruelty as the Egyptians beat Israel.” There is an allusion to the punishment with which the Egyptian were punished in due course, and also to the difference between Israel and the (other) nations with regard to the manner of punishment from God. A second point of contact the author of “Sefer Mita’amim” finds is the promise of redemption in the two paragraphs in which Egypt is mentioned explicitly. In the portion it is told to Moses (Exodus 3:7-8): “Surely I have seen the plight of My people in Egypt...I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the region of the Canaanites...” And in the haftarah, when the prophet prophesies the ingathering of those who are in exile, he says (Isaiah 27:12), “And on that day, the Eternal will beat out *the peoples like grain* from the channel of the Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt; and you shall be picked up one by one. O children of Israel!”

The Rav M. Hirsch, in his commentary to the haftarah, sees the connection between the parashah and the haftarah by emphasizing what they have in common. Here we hear in the parashah that the children of Jacob descend to Egypt and in the crucible of poverty they were refined until they were worthy to be redeemed. And when they sinned as an independent nation in their land, after hundreds of years, again the storm comes upon them and agitates and distances them from their land. Only when the foreign land

and the exile make them fit again (can they) inherit the land. And similar to the exile of Egypt and the suffering in the parashah, the prophet declares, (Isaiah 27:8), "Assailing them with fury unchained, his pitiless blast bore them off on a day of gale." And so he (Hirsch) wants to explain the omission mentioned above in Isaiah 28:13-29, 22-23. The children of Israel sinned in their land and did not know God. It is as if Jacob, "grandfather Israel," is embarrassed. But when he sees his children sanctify the name of heaven (29:22-23), "No more shall Jacob be shamed...For when his children see...sanctifying God's name (martyring themselves)."

But it appears to us that the Rav Haratz in his commentary in English gets even closer to the truth when he emphasizes for us a similar situation, albeit not identical, which is related in both the parashah and in the haftarah. The leader of the nation (God) begins with an action that is designed to bring the end of redemption to an enslaved people and its liberation from the yoke of the oppressor. But, instead of hastening the process of the (removal from) exile, the first result was intensification of the yoke of the slavery, and so was the edict of Pharaoh (Exodus 5:7-8), "You shall no longer provide the people with straw for making brick. Let them go and gather straw for themselves...for they are ones who yell/ones who shriek." And after this, it was made more severe, the yoke of enslavement, until it was unbearable. After Pharaoh turned away empty handed, the Israelite guards said, as the verse tells us (Exodus 5:20-21), "They came upon Moses and Aaron standing to greet them in their going out from Pharaoh. And they said to them, 'May God see you and punish you for making us loathsome to Pharaoh and his servants- putting a sword in their hands to slay us.'" Before us we have a kind of rebellion against the leader, a feeling of embitterment after the first failure. The haftarah,

as well, tells us about a similar approach towards the spiritual *manhig* of the generation, and about the derision and the joking with which they related to his words. In the chapters of the haftarah (if not in the very same verses themselves that are read in the haftarah), they explicitly refer to the members of the nation with the nickname “mocking people,” whereas in the verse of this haftarah, we find the words of mockery themselves (Isaiah 28:14). The prominent connection between the parashah and haftarah comes then to show us the negative attitude of the people to the prophet: whether this is a relationship of embitterment or an attitude of mockery.

Va'era Translation  
Pg. 154-155 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

Those who deal with the exploration of the connection between the parashah and the haftarah make us aware this time of the differences between that which is related here and there about Egypt. Rav Hirsch, in his commentary on the haftarah, points out especially the difference between Egypt in the period of Moses and the period of Ezekiel from a religious standpoint. By means of all the many miracles, the great and mighty plagues, the King of Egypt was brought, in this parashah, to the recognition that there is a superior of supreme power. As if the acts of these miraculous deeds came only to educate Pharaoh, and for the subduing of an arrogant and boastful king to recognize the sovereignty of the creator of the world. However, in the haftarah it appears that the blessed God chooses another means to reach the very same goal. A foreign power, Babylonia, its mighty ruler. These are the tools, the enablers—the rod of wrath—for the subjugation of Egypt. And with this, it is as if he provides a moral lesson to all the generations and to all the nations, that even though God's methods of punishment are different, behold, in all of them it is incumbent upon us to recognize that the hand of God is the one who performs justice in history. The king in the period of the Exodus from Egypt says (Exodus 5:2), "Who is the LORD, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go." And even if they were changed—the historical circumstances—behold, still Pharaoh remains an arrogant and boastful king, who views himself and deludes himself that he created it himself. According to his words (Ezekiel 29:3): "My Nile is my own; I made it for myself." According to Hirsch, there exists a prominent difference between the parashah and the haftarah also in this (matter): that in spite of all the punishments that were being done in Egypt according to

that which is conveyed in the parashah, the king and the inhabitants remain. However, (the place) in which they resided is changed before their eyes by means of the miracles that are done by the hand of the messengers of God. Whereas, even if, according to that which is related in the haftarah, there are no changes which take place in the land itself, its king and its inhabitants are forced to leave—in a similar manner to a crocodile, which is cast from the water to dry land—their homeland.

It appears to us that it is worthwhile also to discuss an additional difference between the Egypt that is in the parashah and the Egypt that is in the haftarah. If we ask ourselves, "What is the relationship every time that Egypt establishes towards Israel?" It appears that in the parashah it tells us about the removal of the yoke of enslavement. But, in the haftarah we hear about the deserved punishment that was done to Egypt for serving as a false or an unreliable support(er), like a split reed, from a political standpoint of Israel in her efforts to free herself from the yoke of the Babylonian rule. The Rabbi Yosef Nobel, in his book in a foreign language on the haftarah, comments on an additional interesting difference between the Egypt within the haftarah, on the one hand, and Israel according to the Torah, on the other hand. In the haftarah it says, (Ezekiel 29:12), "For forty years I will make the land of Egypt the most desolate of desolate lands, and its cities shall be the most desolate of ruined cities." And after the forty years of tribulation and of the exile, what would be with Egypt? The verse adds, (Ezekiel 29:14), "And there they shall be a lowly kingdom." Also, in the history of Israel we know about 40 special years, years of wandering in the desert, as a punishment to the chosen people for the lack of faith in its God. But, afterwards the people is not destined to be a lowly kingdom. Rather, (they are destined) to strike in the promised land and to establish the

Temple, the Temple of God in the place in which God chose for His name to dwell.

When we explore the commentaries for Ezekiel, we will find that also Rashi and Radak see according to the drash the number 40 as a number, which connects Egypt in the parashah, and in the time period of Ezekiel. And these are the words of Radak after he gathers an allusion to Ezekiel, "Is there an explanation for the 40 years? Because 42 years of famine were decreed for Egypt in Pharaoh's dream corresponding to the 3 times that it was written in the dream, that 7 cattle and 7 skinny cows Pharaoh saw and he relayed this to Joseph. Behold! 2 times 14 is 28. And Joseph says 7 skinny and evil cattle and 7 skinny cows, behold 14 and 28 is 42 and they have 2 years of hunger. As it says (Genesis 45:6), "It is now two years that there has been famine in the land." From when Jacob our father descends to Egypt, the famine stops, 40 years come, and it is decreed upon them that now there will be arid land for them for 40 years.

But, it is proper to emphasize, according to the method of Rav Nobel, may his memory be for a blessing, the connection between the parasha and the haftarah, which is emphasized in the opening of the haftarah, where it is written, (Ezekiel 28:25-26) "I shall make myself holy through them in the eyes of the nations...and I will punish all those who despise them." That is to say, through the punishment of the nations, the name of God will be made known in all his strength and might. And, in the parashah, as well in the announcement of the plague, the very same idea is expressed, (Exodus 9:16) "But this is why I have let you live: to show you my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth."

Bo Translation  
pg. 161-162 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

In the parashah, we find the continuation of the plagues that the Holy One Blessed be He brought upon Egypt; the beginning of which we hear about in the previous parashah, parashah Va'era. So also, the haftarah for our parashah is very similar to the haftarah of the previous parashah. And all that is said there about what is similar and what is different between Egypt in the time of Moses and the Egypt of the period of the decline of our freedom in the days of Nebuchadnezzar belongs to a certain degree here as well. It is worthwhile, therefore, again to study and to think about the suitable paragraph of our analysis of the haftarah, Va'era. Primarily, if one remembers that Ezekiel and Jeremiah were both approximately members of the same generation.

The general idea of justice and retribution in Egypt, which is again repeated, and aside from the prominent difference, that in the parashah the revealed miracles occur, enacted by God, whereas, in the haftarah, that very same Babylonia, is the rod of his anger. Rav Yosef Nobel enlightened us to note the common interesting motif. The parashah tells us about the arrogance of the "servants of Pharaoh," among whom there undoubtedly were important ministers, diplomatic leaders, and it is possible perhaps also that representatives of the states who were dependent on Egypt (were there). These (leaders) dare to speak about Pharaoh with great military toughness (Exodus 10:7), "Pharaoh's courtiers said to him, 'How long shall this one be a snare to us? Let the men go to worship the Lord their God! Are you not yet aware that Egypt is lost?'" And also in the haftarah there is heard an undercurrent of rebellion, of despair, of an honest appraisal of the situation on the part of the servants and their entourage. Whereas the king had not yet arrived, it appears, at a full recognition of the true situation. And thus



we should (refer to) the verses (which are indeed slightly cryptic) in Jeremiah 46:16-17:

"They said: (the foreign mercenaries from other nations) 'Arise! Let us return to our people, to the land of our birth, because of the deadly sword.' (In other words, because of Nebuchadnezzar, which came—that is, the sword which was coming—as a punishment for the deceptive actions of Pharaoh). There they called (that is to say, in the camp of Pharaoh) Pharaoh king of Egypt: "Braggart (According to Radak: that he was the king of the noise and uproar) who let the hour go by." (In other words, [in the future] that he would not succeed in the war with Bavel). It becomes clear, therefore, that the expression in the parashah, "Are you not yet aware that Egypt is lost?" parallels slightly the cry of the strangers in the army of Pharaoh, "who let the hour go by."

Yet, there is a blatant difference between these two haftarot and the parshiyot (Va'era and Bo) that remains. For indeed, despite the shared points that are between them, we find a difference between them in the emphasis on the opposition between the fate of Egypt, on the one hand, in comparison to the fate of Israel, on the another side. If in Ezekiel only a few words of comfort to Israel are said, "On that day a ray will bloom for all of the house of Israel." Behold, there are many more of them in Jeremiah, who aside from the emphasis on the difference between the fate of Israel and the fate of Egypt adds another essential discernment of difference between Israel and the nations, from the vantagepoint of the punishment, which comes through divine providence. For behold, so the prophet says. (46:28) "For I will make an end to all the nations, among which I have banished you. But I will not make an end of you! I will not leave you unpunished, but I will chastise you in measure." Rashi analyzes the obscure expression, "But I will chastise you in measure." And he says, "A language of sweeping (as with a broom) and

destruction, and so Yonatan translated it as language of destruction.” Whereas Radak in his explanation formulates the difference between Israel and the nations, “Because he mentioned here retribution against the nations, he says that in contrast to Israel: And now do not see, that you are not like them. But even though they will reside in their land, after their exile, they (the goyim) will not be serene and calm. Rather, their end is that they will be destroyed (and prevented) from being a nation and their name will not be remembered. But Israel—their name will not cease, and their memory will endure as long as the heavens are over the earth.”

Beshalach Translation  
pg. 169-171 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

Both the similarity between the haftarah and parashah and also the difference between them are prominent to the eye this time, both in that a part is prose and a part is in poetry. Also here and there is an imminent danger to the people by way of an enemy that strove to destroy (the people). And only the help of the creator of the world was their bulwark—stood them in good stead, for it (the people) were saved from its enemies. In honor of the savior, the leader of the people arises and sings a song of gratitude to thank God. Yet, despite the common aspect between the two situations and the similarities between the song of Moses and the song of Deborah, how great are the many differences! In the era of Moses, the people went out from Egypt armed with weapons, according to the words of the verse: (Exodus 13:18), "Now the Israelites went up armed from the land of Egypt." But, when the Egyptians came near, the people did not receive them with determined resolve to fight with the enemy. Rather, they were sunk, immersed in depressed. "They cried out to God." But, they hurled their bitter complaint in the face of the leader and they said (Exodus 14:11-12), "'Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, taking us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us be, and we will serve the Egyptians, for it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness'?" And the words of Ibn Ezra in his commentary on this verse are to the point. "One must wonder how it is that a large camp of 600 thousand men would be afraid of the ones who pursued them. And why would they not fight for themselves and for their children? The response: Because the Egyptians were masters over the Jews. And this generation that went out from Egypt had learned from its youth to suffer the yoke of

Egypt with a lowly soul. And how could they (this generation) now fight with their lords? And so it was that Israel was weak, not trained in warfare. Was it not that Amalek came with a small force and were it not for the prayer of Moses, Amalek would have conquered Israel. And, only God, who does great deeds and for Whom all deeds are under his design, turned it around (altered Israel's fate) and brought all the males of the people who went out from Egypt. They did not have the strength to fight against the Canaanites until a generation arose after the wilderness generation, which had not experienced exile. They had proud souls. And indeed for the ones going out from Egypt there was a necessity in the words of calming from the mouth of the Shechinah (Exodus 14:14): "God will fight for you, and you hold your peace!" Whereas in the generation of Deborah and Barak "volunteers amongst the people" were found who went out with few weapons in their hands to fight the cruel and oppressive enemy. And, there was one tribe that about whom it was said: (Judges 5:18), "Zebulun is a people that mocked at death." Even though there were not lacking among the people (individuals) of little faith and love of comfort, about whom the poetess bitterly mocked, (5:16), "Why then did you stay among the sheep folds and listen as they pipe their flocks?"

In the Torah, we hear, therefore, only about God's salvation by way of a miracle, "God will fight for you and you hold your peace!" Whereas, the haftarah tells us about the intertwining of the human effort and the miraculous saving. The deep expression of this intertwining is the verse (5:13), "Then was (in other words, they grew strong and were victorious) the remnant (a weak people) made victor over the mighty (a nation of warriors!) The Lord's people won my victory over the warriors." (in other words, from God came this strength to us, the weak). And aside from the awareness that every victory

that was achieved by the strength of human beings is possible only if God sends his help from above, there occurred this time, too, the described miracle. (4:15), without excessive or a great deal of elaboration, "And the Lord threw Sisera and all his chariots and army into a panic at the edge of the sword before Barak (before the onslaught of Barak)." Whereas in the song, the miraculous saving is related in detail, (5:20-21), "The stars fought from heaven, From their courses they fought against Sisera. The torrent Kishon swept them away."

The Rav Nobel in his German commentary to the haftarot comments about two additional differences. Both in the parashah and in the haftarah we hear about the *women*. After Moses speaks his song, Miriam appears, and this time with the title of respect: "The prophetess." The verse says (Exodus 15:20-21), "And Miriam chanted for them: Sing to the Eternal, for He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea. Then Moses caused Israel to set out from the Sea of Reeds. They went on into the wilderness of Shur; they traveled three days in the wilderness and found no water." And Rashbam, in his explanation for the name "prophetess" defines the actions of a prophet, saying, "A prophet recites the words of praise or rebuke for the children of Israel." For the sake of strengthening the words of Rashbam, it is worthwhile to mention, that in the Book of Chronicles we find the term, prophetess, in relation to music, for indeed there it is said, "David and the officers of the army also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with lyres, harps, ...under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to the LORD" (1 Chronicles 25:1-3).

In the parashah, the role of Miriam is secondary. It is as if she has only just complemented the song of Moses; in her getting the women to join in thanksgiving and in the utilization of musical instruments. But, the woman in the haftarah—Deborah—she is the one who stands in the middle of the action, also in the prose narrative, and she is the one who speaks the song. Deborah is the only woman who unifies, in her personality, the two lofty duties, the role of prophetess and the duty of judge. And as a prophetess she performs and she appears both as one who relates events, speaking the future, in her words to Barak, “‘Very well, I will go with you.’ she answered. ‘However, there will be no glory for you in the course you are taking, for then the Eternal will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.’” And both then—according to the interpretation of Rashbam, as one who reads, “the words of praise” in her great and wonderful song.

But, there exists, according to the comment of the Rav Nobel, the difference between the two epic songs, a difference that is hinted at already in the different beginnings. The song of Moses, behold, begins with the words, “Then he will sing,” and according to the connotation, even if it is not according to the peshat, (interest of Rashi), Behold the verb *shir* appears in the tense of the future. Whereas in the song of Deborah it begins with the word, “And she sang.” Behold, this is in past. And here it becomes clear to all who compare the two epic songs that one of the most prominent differences between them is: In the song of Moses, it is the future which is spoken of, and the commentators are divided only in their opinions whether the thing that is said regarding the future is a prayer or a prophesy. Moses speaks about the conquering of the land and becoming established in it, and about the building of the Temple, in his saying, “You will bring it and implant it on the mountain of your inheritance, established for the resting

from you work, the Holy god, Adonai establishes it by your hand.” But, in the song of Deborah the past is mentioned. The greatest event of the past, the giving of the Torah, is remembered and with unique sublimeness. Deborah says, Judges 5:4-5 “Eternal, when You came forth from Seir, advanced from the country of Edom, the earth trembled; The heavens dripped, the clouds dripped water, the mountains quaked—Before the Eternal, Him of Sinai, Before the Eternal, God of Israel.”

Yitro Translation  
pg. 184-186 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

Two important matters show clearly the connection between that which is related in the Torah and the content of the haftarah. Both here and there the concept "holiness" appears in a crucial place. In the invitation of the giving of the Torah (Exodus 19:5), they name the people that is chosen for this exalted mission, "the holy people." If we scrutinize more it will become clear to us that before us is an intentional gradation. For, in the beginning it is said, (Exodus 19:5-6), "...you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel." And only then does the third level come, "a holy nation." Interesting is the distinction that two important commentators draw about the essence of the kedushah to which the appellation is directed. Ramban enlightens, "And you shall be a kingdom of my servants and a holy nation to cling to the holy God. As he said, (Leviticus 19:2), 'You shall be Holy for I, the Eternal, am holy.' And behold, he promised them [both] in this world and in the world to come. Ramban sees that the name, holy people, is a specific role in the way of God and more. But, Rav Ovediah Seforno suffices with establishing the special attribute that is given metaphorically to the people by the nickname of kedushah, in his saying, "holy nation." But, you will exist forever through (one) man, as it will be for the matter of the world to come, in his saying (Isaiah 4:3), "And those who remain in Zion and are left in Jerusalem—all who are inscribed for life in Jerusalem—Shall be called holy." And they said, may their memory be for a blessing, (Sanhedrin Perek Helek, 92): "Just as the Holy (one) exists forever, so they (the people of Israel) exist forever." And this great meaning, "holy" appears in the haftarah in a



crucial place. The prophet, Isaiah, merited greatly a vision that has within it seeing and hearing. And what does he hear? "And they called one to the other and said: holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is filled with his glory." The holiness in the book of Isaiah is an attribute of the Holy One Blessed be He, and not a task that was cast on mankind or a mission, or an attribute that exists in him (in mankind) metaphorically or allegorically. Because of only the creator alone is it said, as a designation of his essence, that He is Holy. And maybe it is worthwhile in order to emphasize the difficulty of the intellectual perception of the idea of holiness when it is related to God—to bring here the words of the Cuzari to which the Radak refers in his commentary on Isaiah. Judah HaLevi said (4th book, chapter 3): "And holy is an appellation, that he is too sanctified for any attribute of created beings to appropriately convey. And if he is called by them (by these humans), it is only by way of metaphor. And, therefore, Isaiah hears holy, holy, holy repeatedly. And the reason for the repetition is his being too sanctified and exalted for even an iota of the impurities of the nation amongst which his glory resides to reach him (or encompass him by way of attributes)."

We have, therefore, seen the concept of holiness is common in both with only a (slight) alternation in meaning here (in the parashah) and there (in the haftarah).

On the one who established the haftarot, there was influencing the fact (and this is the second matter that connects the haftarah to the parashah), that also in the Torah and also in the words of the prophet the revelation of the Shechinah is spoken about. In the parashah, it is said explicitly (Exodus 19:20), "And God descended onto Mt. Sinai." But Moses in his speech of farewell is meticulous in emphasizing and warning, (Deut. 4:12-15), "The Eternal spoke to you out of the fire; you heard the sound of words but

perceived no shape—nothing but a voice...For your own sake, therefore, be most careful—since you saw no shape when the Eternal your God spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire.” Whereas Isaiah tells us (Isaiah 6:1-2), “I beheld my Eternal seated on a high and lofty throne; and the skirts of His robe filled the Temple. Seraphs stood in attendance on Him.” Prominent and emphatic is the difference both in the form and content of the revelation. How in form? An entire people merits only to hear the voice of God. But Isaiah, the only one and the chosen one merits, as it were, also of seeing something from his Holy Shechinah. But, how great is the difference and how great is the distance between standing at Mt. Sinai and the vision of Isaiah? From the vantagepoint of the content of the revelation and from the vantagepoint of the situation of the people for whom the revelation is intended—here an entire people is prepared for the revelation by means of demarcation (being quarantined) and it’s (the nation is about to receive the 10 commandments that will order its life) for generations upon generations. Both in its relationship with God and its relationship with the other. About God himself they do not hear, rather only about his relationship with God and its relationship to Israel as the One who took them out of Egypt, and about the prohibition of making idols and other prohibitions which derive from this unique connection that is between God and between the chosen people. And whereas here a solitary prophet, Isaiah, stands and merits a clear revelation of the Deity, and he merits to hear from the mouth of the Heavenly servants the tiniest bit of the essence of God who is the supreme One that he is the one on high and the absolute Holy One. By contrast, the distance between God and the chosen people here is so great that it is imposed upon (the prophet) to tell the people that calamity after calamity is foreseen for it (the Jewish people) by the crime of rebellion against the Torah

of God. But, inspite of all the differences that are between the parashah and the haftarah, what is in common between these two events on the one hand and the distance between the destiny and the reality and the conclusions of the afflictions of the haftarah? Behold, there is nothing but the idea of holiness when it relates to the people. Of the people it is said in the Torah that they are bound to become a holy nation and this thing is imposed upon them as their destiny, as a duty, according to Seforno: "As an attribute and Isaiah prophesies, in spite of all of the punishments that are foreseen for the people their holiness will not be diminished. (Isaiah 6:13), "Its stump shall be a holy seed." And it is worthwhile to emphasize here the difference between this perception and the first explanation of Rashi in comparison to the explanation of Radak. Rashi says, "Like an oak and another tree." That in the time of their fall, shedding after shedding, until there does not remain in them anything except the stump. Although only the stump remains, nonetheless, a holy seed remains in it. The ones who remain maintain their holiness and will become a foundation stone. In other words, only by the merit of the righteous will a small part remain of the people. And Radak, in his explanation, sees in the people a quality of eternity as he says, "Even though all of them will be exiled, you should not think that you will end in exile, and not return to their land. For they will yet return to their land."

Mishpatim Translation  
pg. 192-193 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

Here the connection between the parashah and the haftarah is a significant connection, because, behold, here the two of them speak similarly about the very same mitzvah of the dismissal of the Hebrew slave. But, it is worthwhile also to pay attention to the differences, which exist between the commandment in the Torah and between the way of execution according to the words of the prophet. The teaching in our parashah says (Exodus 21:2), "If you acquire a Hebrew slave, he shall serve you for six years. But on the seventh he will go out to be a free man." And in the teaching of the Torah it is written (Deut. 15:12), "If a fellow Hebrew, man or woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall set him free from you." Before us therefore is A: a demand which is directed to the individual and B: the fixing of the date of release which depends in each and every situation on the year of the selling of the slave. In other words, his dismissal will occur at the completion of six years of enslavement.

If we will turn now to that which is related in the haftarah, we will find two prominent differences. The owners of the slaves and of the female slaves do not fulfill that which is imposed upon them according to the Torah without intervention from the outside. Rather, for this sending out it was needed to make a formal covenant, according to what is explicitly said, (Jeremiah 34:8, 18-19), "After King Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people of Jerusalem to proclaim a release among them...the words of the covenant which they made before Me, (like) the calf which they cut in two so as to pass between the halves (refers to Genesis 15:9-10, 17-12). The officials of Judah and

Jerusalem, the officials, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the halves of the calf.” Aside from this, the haftarah speaks in opposition to the enactment of the Torah. It is not about individual release according to the year of sale. Rather, it is about collective releasing, without considering the length of the years of enslavement. Abravanel correctly comments about Jeremiah, “That the king Zedekiah and his people returned for them the dwelling of the Hebrew slaves and female slaves that were enslaved by them more than the six years that the Torah commanded.” Aside from the two aforementioned differences between the commandment in the Torah as it was given and between the (mode of) fulfillment in the time of Zedekiah, we must also note the difference in the essential wording of the formulation of the commandment in Jeremiah in contrast to the wording that we have already cited from the books of the Torah. In Jeremiah, it is said (34:13-14), “I made a covenant with them when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, saying, ‘In the seventh year each of you must let go of any fellow Hebrew who may be sold to you; when he has served you six years, you must set him free.’” According to the simple meaning of the Torah, we did not find any special making of a covenant in the Torah for a commandment of releasing the slave, rather certainly in its intention is what Abravanel commented: “and the matter is that at the standing on Mount Sinai the God commanded and (simultaneously) made a (formal) covenant about it and about the rest of the mitzvot with the children of Israel that at the end of seven years. But, he wants to say from the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> year. For every servant and servant girl, the rest of the Hebrews will send out.” The intention of Abravanel is clear. He connects the covenant to what is related in Exodus 24 in the end of our parashah, where it describes in the finest detail the making of the covenant upon

the receiving of the Torah. And it appears to us that the prophet purposely used the term of "covenant" in connection to this solitary mitzvah—the releasing of the slaves—in order to emphasize by way of the betrayal that is (implied in) the breach of the covenant, which is now a double betrayal. A: The breach of the covenant of the Torah, within which the commandment of the releasing of the slaves is one of many commandments for the sake of the fulfillment of which the covenant was made. B: The break of the special celebratory covenant that was made in the days of Hezekiah for the sake of fulfilling the commandment of the releasing of the slaves.

And in this we have found a second thing that connects what is related in the Torah to what is depicted in the haftarah—and this is the idea of covenant. About the making of the covenant as part of (the process of) fulfillment of the Torah in general, it is said (Exodus 24:7), "And he took the book of the covenant and he read it to the ears of the people and they said: every word of God we will do and we will obey." And about the breaching of the special covenant, that covenant that was a result of a great hour in the history of our people—a covenant to fix that which is distorted in the life of the community—about this breach, the haftarah speaks. The final decree of national destruction was decreed, according to the words of the prophet, (34:17), "You would not obey Me and proclaim a release, each to his kinsman and countryman. Lo! I proclaim your release—declares the Eternal—to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine; and I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth."

One commentator of the haftarah, Rav M. Hirsch, juxtaposes one to the other. Contrast the concern over freedom and liberty which is emphasized in the parashah as a foundation and the base and beginning of civil legislation and the contempt for

"freedom" in the haftarah as a final and decisive argument for the loss of national independence.

Rav Nobel, in his book on the haftarah, expresses his theory that the two last verses in our haftarah are taken from the previous chapter come in order not to end with a bad matter. But, it appears to us that it is possible that there is here an additional connection between the haftarah and the parashah if we compare the two covenants to each other. In the parashah, the nation of Israel promises in public to fulfill all the words of Torah, but the biblical history of our people has taught more about how they violated it. And even this special covenant that was made—as it is told in the haftarah—for the sake of strengthening a mitzvah that was imposed upon them, which in any event, does not help and is too violated. He keeps His covenant and just as the laws of nature of the creation is a kind of covenant, so is Israel eternal, and eternal also are the institutions of kingship and the priesthood.

The treachery of humankind as opposed to truth and fidelity is the polarity which derives from a comparison of the ending of the parashah and the haftarah. And, let us bring here with the beautiful poem of Yehuda Halevi on the success of Israel:

The sun and moon have forever served ;  
 their natural order by day and night have not ceased:  
 They have been given as signs to the seed of Jacob,  
 to be a nation for eternity and not to be cut off.  
 If with his left hand He pushes them away—  
 with his right hand he draws them close.  
 Let them not despair at a time when (their fate) is perverted,  
 but rather let them believe that they (will exist) for eternity  
 And that they shall not cease until day and night cease (to exist).

Terumah Translation  
Pg. 200-202 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

Both the parashah and haftarah tell us about the establishment of the house of God. In the period of the desert, this was a modest tent, whereas in the days of Solomon a solid building was established in much glory. The comparison between what is related in the Torah in contrast to what is related in the haftarah makes clear to us, especially, the differences. The Torah emphasizes (Exodus 25:2), "You shall accept gifts for me from every person whose heart so moves him." The generosity of the heart is what causes all of the people to participate in the providing of supplies, all the materials that were required to make the Mishkan. And also, in another place the Torah tells about the response of the people to this summoning, (Exodus 36:5-7), "And said (the artisans) to Moses, 'The people are bringing more than is needed for the tasks entailed in the work that the Lord has commanded to be done.' Moses thereupon had this proclamation made throughout the camp: 'Let no man or woman make further effort toward gifts for the sanctuary!' So the people stopped bringing: their efforts had been more than enough for all the tasks to be done." Moreover, it tells us that the women joined in both volunteering (contributions) and in the very doing of the work. One time it is written (Exodus 38:8), "He made the laver of copper and its stand of copper, from the mirrors of the women who performed tasks at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting." And one time it is written (Exodus 35:25-26), "All the skillful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns and fine linen; And all the women whose hearts moved them to use their skill spun the goats' hair."



In contrast to the emphasis on volunteering at the beginning of the parashah, the haftarah tells us in the first sentences the total contrast (1 Kings 5:27-28). "King Solomon imposed forced labor on all Israel; the levy came to 30,000 men. He sent them to the Lebanon. A month they would spend in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor." In the Book of Exodus, the Egyptians are the ones to put forced labor and enslavement on the shoulders of the people, whereas, *now a king of Israel* enslaves a part of the people three months in a year. Rav M. Hirsch comments here "What a blatant contrast there is between those who force them to work in the erection of the Temple and between the women that about their activity in the making of the mishkan the Torah relates. This matter is liable to arouse difficult feelings in the heart of the reader because what they conjure up before them is the memories of the period of enslavement in Egypt. Also Rav Hertz, in his commentary in a foreign language, comments: Maybe the mechuttano, his Egyptian father-in-law, taught Solomon to institute forced labor in Israel. And from here the seed sprouted that was bound to give rise to the rebellion against the methods of the ruling of Solomon in the days of his son." The historian Ya'avatz tries to sweeten a little this blemish by which the kingdom of Solomon was blemished by means of forced labor in general and the matter of slaves of Solomon, in particular, in his saying (The History of Israel Part 2: Page 64, footnote 1): "Graetz portrays an image of the work of the slaves of Solomon according to the slavery in Egypt and commiserates with them." But, were there any validity in this (comparison of the enslavement in the time of Solomon to the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt) then now the children of the slaves of Solomon would not have adhered to Israel and would not have gone into exile in the days of Zedekiah, but rather would have joined with the

poor people of the land, who had given them vineyards and cultivated fields. (2 Kings 25:12). And they would not have suffered together with them (with Israel) afterwards to return with them from Bavel in the days of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple (Ezra 2:55, Nehemiah 7, 57). But, it is worthwhile, in our opinion, to add here that also during the First Temple there is no lack of volunteering on the part of the people. And this we learn from the words of David, the one who says in prayer (D'vrai Hayamim 1 29:17-18), "I know, God, that You search the heart and desire uprightness; I, with upright heart, freely offered all these things; now Your people, who are present here -- I saw them joyously making freewill offerings. O Eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, remember this to the eternal credit of the thoughts of Your people's hearts, and make their hearts constant toward You."

Studying the beginnings of both the parashah and haftarah points out to us an additional difference between them. In the erection of the tent of meeting in the desert, the whole thing was done by Israel—in all of their strata (every social group) they are the ones who volunteer and they are the ones who contribute, whereas in the era of Solomon, it is through his wisdom that God gave to him, and thanks to the peace which reigned between Hiram (king of Tyre) and Solomon, the Tyrian (inhabitants of Tyre) cooperated in the work and in the supplying of the building materials.

And so it there stands before us, one against the other, the popular (of the people) and simple, but fully saturated with enthusiasm and sincere devotion. In contrast to the erection of a glorious structure by the initiative of the king in the days of Solomon, for the sake of the implementation of which structure imposes forced labor on the member of the children of his people and becomes connected to a foreign king. And here it is

worthwhile that we should bring the amazement of Abravanel about the end of the haftarah. He asks in his commentary to Kings the following question: "Why is it that the writer of the book saw fit to introduce into the story the building, the (very) same prophesy that came to Solomon, "this house that you build, etc." (5:11-13). And it would have been deemed worthwhile that he should have mentioned it either in the beginning of the story or at its end. And that he should not have interrupted the narration about the work of the building of the Temple. And that he should have brought this prophecy and the verses about the building from this and from that and the prophecy in the middle." And from the answer of Abravanel we will bring only a few sentences, "Do not think, Solomon, that (the Temple) will stand for eternity, and for the sake of this your will make the building sturdy and strong. Because here its durability depends on the condition: if you and those who come after you will follow my laws then I will fulfill the good words that I have spoken to David, namely that I will dwell among the children of Israel."

Also Rav M. Hirsch in his commentary on the haftarah deals with this puzzlement and, in his opinion, the warning comes here, in this place, in order to emphasize not the external splendor and not the splendor in ornamentations that glorify the building, but rather the closeness of the Shechinah. This is the desired goal.

And therefore, there is in the end of the haftarah something in the nature of a connecting theme to the beginning of the parashah, even if (albeit) the purpose is different. The parashah explains that the mission of the tent of meeting is (made) explicit. And also in the haftarah, the very same is explained. But, it comes in combination with a warning and perhaps even also as a kind of rebuke. In the parashah, it is written, (Exodus 25:8), "Make me a holy place so that I will dwell amongst you." And

the words of the conclusion of the haftarah are. (6:13), "And I will dwell amongst the children of Israel and I shall not abandon the people of Israel."

Teztaveh Translation  
pg. 209-211 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

The parallelism this time is quite prominent for, behold, both the parashah and the haftarah speak about the dedication of the altar. In Exodus 29:1-37, Scripture brings in detail the offerings that were needed to sacrifice for the dedication of the altar and it finishes with these words: "Seven days you shall atone on the altar. You shall sanctify it and the altar will be the holy of holies. Everything that touches the altar will be holy." And the haftarah, as well, finishes (with) (Ezekiel 43:26-27): "Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. When these days are over, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being; and I will accept you, says the Lord GOD."

But, nonetheless, how different is the commandment to build in the haftarah from that which is in the parashah! In the Torah, the covenant for the making of the tabernacle comes after the great experience of receiving the Torah, and as we have shown in our article in the haftarah Beshalach "Allusions to the giving of the Torah in the Bible." Behold, according to the Ramban's opinion the tabernacle was destined to continue the standing event at Mt. Sinai by the creation of a place in which the presence of the divine one would be sensed. And, in accordance with the words of the Ramban, (Exodus 25:2), "And behold, they who are holy, they are worthy of a sanctuary that will be with them and cause His presence to dwell amongst them." Whereas, Ezekiel adds, in the name of God, strangely and suprisingly a rational for the commandment of building, is brought in the beginning of the haftarah, (43:10), "Now you, O mortal, tell the House of Israel of the Temple and let them be ashamed of their iniquities." According to Radak, the commandment to build the tabernacle is made conditional on penitence that they are

bound to do, and that shame is part of it, and these are his words, "If they will be ashamed of all that they did, let them know about the plan of the Temple and write it before their eyes. And they will see the building of the Temple in the future and they will make it, and if not—not." And before this Radak already commented, "They will be ashamed of their iniquities."—That due to them, the Temple was destroyed. And, inform them that the future Temple will not be destroyed because they will not sin. As it is written (43:10), "They will distance themselves from their prostitution and I will dwell in their midst forever." According to Rashi, they emphasize here the feelings of shame for the sake of highlighting the loving-kindness of God. These are his words: "They will be ashamed of their iniquities," through my showing them grace that I do not detest them because of their sin.

Rav Hirsch in his commentary on the haftarah sees the emphasis on the embarrassment in this spot (in Scripture) as a central idea in the perception of the value of the Temple in Israel. This verse comes to us precisely after the bitter experience of the destruction, because of the sins of the people. There is a great distance between the holy and the pure, that the Temple serves for them as a symbol and a tangible expression, (and) between the frailty of man who is drawn to sin. And so the idea of the Temple is preserved most carefully that it will not become, God forbid!—to be as the ways of the other nations—from the building—a kind of magical structure which shields the people through its mysterious power.

And here the essential and important question is asked: to which building did Ezekiel refer in his descriptions? Radak writes clearly in his commentary to this section (43:12), "We are not able to explain, 'and he made them.' During the second Temple

when the children of the exile in Babylonia ascended. For there are many things within this process of building that were not so with the Second Temple. And it is compulsory for you to say that the building is in the future.” According to Rashi, it turns out that actually all was supposed to have been done according to the plan of Ezekiel already with the Second Temple. But sin changed the face of the redemption and its ways were transformed. And this is the language of Rashi for 43:11: “The second coming (entry into the Land) of Ezra was supposed to have been like the first coming of Joshua to enter by force of armed might, and through miracles as we have derived (Sotah 36) “Until the Thy people pass [the intent is to the following words of the Gemara: ‘We have learned: until this people that Thou hast created—this is the second entry] and this building was worthy (in other words they were worthy of having this Temple) from long ago when they came up from the exile and (they were worthy of) eternal salvation, but sin caused that their penitence was not proper. So that they would not sin, they went out under the auspices of Cyrus and they built (the Temple) for themselves. And there are those who say in Babylonia that they got in trouble with the foreign (non-Jewish) women.

A unique approach to this problem—if the prophet Ezekiel intended the second Temple or the third—is found in the words of the Rambam. He writes (“Laws of the Chosen House of the,” verse 1, halacha 4): “The building that Solomon built is already described in Kings, and so is the building of the future to be built, even though what is written in Ezekiel, it is not explained or elucidated. And the people of the Second Temple, who built in the time of Ezra, built it like the building of Solomon, and like the words that are explicated in Ezekiel.

Ki Tissa Translation  
pg. 218-220 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

This time the similarity of that which is narrated in the parashah and the content of the haftarah is the most prominent. In the two stories, we see how the people returns, through the power of the influence of the leader, from idolatry to worship of the one and only God. And also here and there the sinners receive their punishment. At the end of the tale, (both in the parashah and in the haftarah), the leader stands in prayer before God. In Yalkut Shemoni to Kings (title of Rash tet) a parable is brought which compares Elijah to Moses. Let us bring here only those passages which teach us what is common between them in the matter of eradicating idolatry. And this is the language of the midrash:

“Moses gathered Israel before Mt. Sinai, and Elijah gathered them before Mt. Carmel. Moses eradicated idolatry, as it is written (Exodus 32:27), ‘Put your sword on your side, each of you!’ And Elijah eradicated the worshippers of idolatry and caught the prophets of Ba’al and slaughtered them. Moses was jealous (Exodus 32, 26), ‘Who is on the Eternal’s side? Come to me!’ And Elijah is jealous as it is written (1 Kings 18:30), ‘And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me.’ And Moses prayed for Israel as it is written (Deut. 9:26), ‘do not annihilate Your very own people.’ And Eliyahu prayed, as it is written (1 Kings 18:37), ‘Answer me, O Eternal, answer me.’ Moses comprehended the merit of the fathers (adopted the argument in pleading for Israel), as it is written (Exodus 32:13), ‘Remember Abraham.’ And Elijah (used)–the 12 stones to say ‘Israel shall be your name.’ Regarding Moses, Israel accepted through him God’s love, as it is written (Exodus 24:7), ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will obey.’



And (regarding) Elijah (the people) receive it (the love of God) by through him and he said (1 Kings 18:39) 'the Eternal indeed is God.'"

But, despite all of the common aspect(s) that the Midrash knew to emphasize in detail, it is worthwhile that we should also note the obvious differences between the similar narratives. Only by way of the miracle does Elijah succeed in persuading those whom wavered, "hopping between two opinions" (1 Kings 18:21). In contrast, Moses reveals to the people the worthlessness of idolatry through an action that was absolutely natural and so the verse tell us (Exodus 32:20), "He took the calf that they had made, burned it with fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it." In the opinion of the Ramban in his commentary on the matter of the making of the calf (32:1): It was not at all the intention of the people to perceive the calf as an actual pagan God symbol, in opposition to the worship of Ba'al in the time of Elijah. The appearance of Moses, descending from the mountain was enough to motivate them to abandon the calf and to obey his voice as before. And these are the words of Ramban: "But this verse is the key to understanding the matter of the calf and to considering the deeds of those who made it. Because certainly Israel did not believe that Moses is God and that he did, with strength, for them the signs and the miracles...But they were seeking another Moses...and that is the reason that they mention (32:1), 'Moses, the man who brought us out.' Not the 'god' that had brought them out, for they would need a 'man of God.' Thus, the matter was: as soon as the people saw Moses, immediately they put aside the calf and rejected it for they allowed him (Moses) to burn it and to scatter its ashes on the face of the water, and there was no one who disagreed at all. For if it (in other words, the calf) had become for them a God, there would have been no way that a

people would abandon its kings, and its god for burning; for behold he (Moses) would burn their abomination before their eyes and they would not stone him."

Rav Nobel, in his comments on the haftarot, remarks on a common, but nevertheless differing point in the parashah and haftarah. In the two matters (i.e. contexts, subject matters of the Torah and haftarah, respectively) a unique thing happens with regard to the Torah. Moses dares to break the tablets. As is known, the commentators disagree in the estimation of this deed. Rashi brings the words of the Talmud (Shabbat 87), which affirm, as positive, the breaking and he said, "Just as the Passover offering that is one of the commandments, the Torah said: (Exodus 12:43), 'No foreigner shall eat of it that his deeds became alienated from his father in Heaven and in (this regard) one and the same are idol worshippers and Jews in this category. See of Rashi, *ibid*].'" (This is Moses speaking before he smashes the tablets). The Torah in its entirety is here and all the Israelites are apostates and I should give it to them? In contrast, the Ramban suffices in explaining Moses' deed as a human failing. In his explanation of Exodus 32:16: "The tablets were the work of God." It was worthy that scripture should have mentioned the entire story in the verse, "and he gave to Moses" when he said, "They were written by the hand of God." But, he mentioned it here to tell of their noble traits, saying: Moses did not refrain, in spite of all of this, from breaking them because he was angry (at the people) in his seeing this evil act and he was not able to restrain himself."

He also even dared to do an act against the Torah—in the sense of "an abrogation of the Torah actually leads to establishing or strengthening it." That they said in the Gemara (Menuchot 99) about the breaking the tablets of Moses—in that he

sacrificed the offering outside the designated (space). And these are the words of the Rambam in the Introduction to the Mishnah (1<sup>st</sup> Publication Page 22): "And like Elijah did on Mt. Carmel that he sacrificed an offering outside the designated spot, and (or while) Jerusalem was standing—i.e. with its centralized cult, and the Holy Temple was built. And this is a mitzvah (namely, only to sacrifice in Jerusalem) anyone who does it without the commandment (i.e. the special permission) of a prophet is subject to the punishment of karet. And the Holy One Blessed Be He warns him in the Torah and says (Deut. 12:13), "Take care not to sacrifice your burnt offerings in any place you see."

And the one who commits this (offering up a sacrifice outside of Jerusalem) is subject to the punishment of karet. As He said about the one who offers up a sacrifice outside (of Jerusalem) (Leviticus 17:4), "he shall be held guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood, and he shall be cut off from the people." But he, may he rest in peace, if his God in the hour of his sacrifice on Mt. Carmel said to him, "Is one able to do according to this deed all the days of the eternity? It was said: It is not permitted and anyone who sacrifices outside—obligation of Karet; But, this is the deed before the hour to exile within it the nearing of the prophets of Ba'al and to put an end to what is in their hands.

The author of Sefer Mat'amim tries also to explain the difference between the tradition of the Ashkenazim, who begin the haftarah already at the beginning of chapter 18 and the tradition of the Sefardim, who begin the haftarah at the very point the encounter at Mt. Carmel. Thereby, even he succeeded in finding another miracle common to Moses and Elijah. And these are his words, (page 141), "The reason for the haftarah of Ki Tissa for the Ashkenazim is because that also Elijah disappeared for many days and Moses, our teacher, also here, was delayed on the mountain many days."

Vayekel Pikudai Translation  
Pgs. 229-230 (*Hazon HaMikra*)

The reader is requested to connect to here that which we wrote in the section, Juxtaposition, for the haftarah of the parashah Terumah, where we tried to point out that which is shared and that which is unique between the establishment of the Tent of Meeting on the one hand, and the building of Solomon on the other. And with all that is written there, it is also possible to explain the reason of the rabbis (the ones of wisdom, may they rest in peace) for the selection of the three passages for the haftarot of the parshiyot that describe the work of the tent of meeting. But, it is appropriate to indicate here in addition to that which has already been said on one different side, and to indicate a common issue (that) is totally unique.

The most prominent difference between the making of the tent of meeting, on the one hand, and the building of the Holy Temple in the days of Solomon on the other, is, possibly (in) what was told about the strength of the actual principle, which activates all the work and creativity. In the portion, Vayakhel, (Exodus 35:30-36; and also Exodus 31:1-11) it is said: "See, the Eternal has called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; he has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft...And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan" (35:34). Already, by way of a brief scanning of the verse itself it appears that Bezalel is called to his duty by way of God. He and all of his unique talents came to him from God, because God is the one who instilled in him His spirit. The aggadah only deepens the language of the verse when it explains,

according to its way, also the name "Bezalel," with the meaning, "In shadow of God you were" (Berachot 55).

And what is said in the telling of Kings about the selection of the principal artisan? These are the words of the verse (1 Kings 7:13-14): "Now King Solomon invited and took Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, whose father, a man of Tyre, had been an artisan in bronze; he was full of skill, intelligence, and knowledge in working bronze."

And certainly the closeness of the language causes us to note with special prominence the differences. It is not God who summons the artist, but rather the king sends, and does not name the faithful. The king seeks in a foreign land in order to bring from there the one who is talented for the work. For apparently, there, in the foreign land, he (Hiram) knew how to acquire the knowledge and the experience that is required for the work. In contrast to this: Bezalel—May the name be blessed—the divinity is that which bestowed upon him the insightful intelligence and knowledge. And although the very same expressions appear also in the case of the artist in the days of Solomon, behold only in a most unspecific form is it said here, "He was endowed with skill, ability, and talent..."

This question also arises: if Hiram in the days of Solomon was a Jew fully in his origin or only by way of his mother? Come and we will hear the words of the explanation of Abravanel for the matter: "It is worthwhile to comment on these verses, that it says here that Hiram was son of a widowed woman from the tribe of Naphtali and in Chronicles (2, 2:13), it is said, 'from the daughters of Dan'...and the commentators said that she was from Dan and her husband was from Naphtali. But he was a sojourner

and a temporary dweller in Tzur and therefore, he was called a Tzurite, notwithstanding that he was among the children of Israel just Oved the Giti—albeit he was a Levi because he dwelled in Gat (Chronicles 2, 6:30-35, Chronicles 1, 26:8). And it is possible to say that he was a Tzurite from his birth as Scripture testifies that his wife was a Jew and she was married to him for some reason or another.”

Through study of the passages of the haftarah, there becomes evident a unique emphasis on the things that are made by Hiram (1 Kings 7:40-46) and on those that are considered as if Solomon made them (1 Kings 7:48-50). Accordingly, we find in Yalkut Shemoni the emphasis of this shared aspect between the making of the tabernacle and (the making of) the Holy Temple. And these are the words of the aggadah (Siman Kafeh): “Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Haaya bar Hanina: You find when the tabernacle was made two tribes were partners in the labor(s). The tribe of Judah, Bezalel, the tribe of Dan, Oholiav, son of Ahisamach; and so (also) in the work of the Holy Temple; he was the son of a widowed woman, from the daughters of Dan and of Solomon, son of David, of the tribe of Judah.”

Special importance is known for what is in common between the buildings by virtue of the coming to abide of the divine presence amongst them both in the days of Moses and those in the days of Solomon—at the hour of the completion of the building. In the Torah it is said (Exodus 40:34-35): “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” And similar to this, it is told in Kings (1 8:10-11), “And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Eternal, so that the priests

could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Eternal filled the house of the Eternal."

## Alternative Haftarat for Shemot

## Jeremiah 23:1-8

1 הוֹי רֹעִים מַאֲבִדִּים וּמַפְצִיץ אֶת־צֹאן מִרְעֵיתִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה:  
 2 לָכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־הָרֹעִים הָרֹעִים  
 אֲתֵעָמִי אַתֶּם הַפְצַתֶם אֶת־צֹאנִי וַתִּדְחֻם וְלֹא פָקַדְתֶּם אֹתָם  
 הֲנִי פֹקֵד עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־דֹּרְעַי מֵעַלְלֵיכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה:  
 3 וְאֲנִי אֶקְבֹּץ אֶת־שְׂאֵרֵיט צֹאנִי מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר־הִדְחֵיתִי  
 אֹתָם שָׁם וְהִשְׁבֹּתִי אֹתָהֶן עַל־נוֹהֶן וּפְרוּ וְרָבוּ:  
 4 וְהִקְמַתִי עֲלֵיהֶם רֹעִים וְרָעוּם וְלֹא־יִירָאוּ עוֹד וְלֹא־יִנְחָתוּ  
 וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ נְאֻם־יְהוָה:  
 5 הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְהִקְמַתִי לָדוֹד צִמַּח צִדִּיק  
 וּמֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ וְהִשְׁפִּיל וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה בָּאָרֶץ:  
 6 בְּיָמָיו תִּושַׁע יְהוּדָה וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכֹּן לִבְטָח וְזֶה־שְׁמוֹ  
 אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָאוּ יְהוָה צִדְקָנוּ:  
 7 לָכֵן הִנֵּה־יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְלֹא־יֹאמְרוּ עוֹד חִירֵיהֶן  
 אֲשֶׁר הָעִלָּה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:  
 8 כִּי אֶסְחִירֵיהֶן אֲשֶׁר הָעִלָּה וְאֲשֶׁר הֵבִיא אֶת־דֹּרְעַי בֵּית  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ צִפּוֹנָה וּמִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדְחֵיתִים שָׁם  
 וַיִּשְׁבּוּ עַל־אֲדָמָתָם:

<sup>1</sup> Ah, shepherds who let the flock of My pasture stray and scatter! -- declares the Eternal.

<sup>2</sup> Assuredly, thus said the ETERNAL, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who should tend My people: It is you who let My flock scatter and go astray. You gave no thought to them, but I am going to give thought to you, for your wicked acts -- declares the ETERNAL.

<sup>3</sup> And I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock from all the lands to which I have banished them, and I will bring them back to their pasture, where they shall be fertile and increase.

<sup>4</sup> And I will appoint over them shepherds who will tend them; they shall no longer fear or be dismayed, and none of them shall be missing -- declares the ETERNAL.



<sup>5</sup> See, a time is coming -- declares the ETERNAL -- when I will raise up a true branch of David's line. He shall reign as king and shall prosper, and he shall do what is just and right in the land.

<sup>6</sup> In his days Judah shall be delivered and Israel shall dwell secure. And this is the name by which he shall be called: "The ETERNAL is our Vindicator."

<sup>7</sup> Assuredly, a time is coming -- declares the ETERNAL -- when it shall no more be said, "As the ETERNAL lives, who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt,"

<sup>8</sup> but rather, "As the ETERNAL lives, who brought out and led the offspring of the House of Israel from the northland and from all the lands to which I have banished them." And they shall dwell upon their own soil.

## With Strong Hands and Outstretched Arms Sharon Cohen Anisfeld

The image of God's strong hand and outstretched arm simultaneously comforts and challenges us. No place, no matter how desperate, is beyond the reach of God's redeeming hand. Yet, confronted with the urgent problem of human suffering, then and in our own time, we must struggle to understand our own place in the story. What was and is the role of human beings in bringing an end to suffering and injustice? How do we cultivate a sense of gratitude and humility, without encouraging passivity and helplessness in the face of an unredeemed world? A closer look at the opening chapters of exodus reveals that the image of God's "strong hand and outstretched arm" has reverberations throughout the story of our departure from Egypt and that, in fact, it bears not a simple message of human powerlessness but a complex message of interdependence between human being and God.

This story begins with a cry--- the deep, inarticulate cry of pain and longing that rises up from the bellies of the Israelite slaves and ascends to heaven. It is this cry, at the end of the second chapter of the Book of Exodus that--after generations of slavery-- finally evokes a response from God and sets the process of liberation in motion:

The Israelites were groaning under their bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God. God heard their moaning, and God remember the covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

The cry of the Israelites at this point in the story is particularly significant when we consider the profound silence that it pierces. For the horror of Pharaoh's Egypt is epitomized by the effort to stifle, muffle, and silence the human cry. The following midrash brings that horror into full relief:

Rabbi Akiva says: Pharaoh's police would strangle the Israelites in the walls of the buildings, between the bricks. And they would cry out from within the walls and God would hear their moaning, as it is said, "And God heard their moaning and God remembered the covenant..." (Exodus 2:24).

In the biblical text itself, there are other intimations of the stifled human cry.

Indeed, the quintessential human cry is the cry of the newborn. Great pains are taken by the women of Exodus to ensure that this cry is not heard, lest it be silenced forever. This is implied in the text when we learn that Yocheved could no longer hide Moses at three months---presumably because there was too great a risk that his cries would be heard.

The following midrash elaborates on this poignant image:

R. Hanan said, "What did the chaste and virtuous Israelite women do? They took their infants and hid them in holes [in their houses]. So the wicked Egyptians would take their own young children, bring them into the homes of the Israelites, and pinch their young until they cried. When the Israelite infants in their hiding places heard the Egyptian children cry, they cried with them. Then the Egyptians would seize the Israelite infants and cast them into the Nile."

Moses the Messenger  
Yannai

Into the wilderness the Messenger drove his flock;  
into the wilderness he would lead his people like a flock.

Without feet he ran, rushing his herd  
to the place where he would see his vision of God.

Green crops sprang up before him,  
then were swallowed in his wake.

In a single day he traveled a long distance,  
for he who loves straightness straightened the path before him.

When he reached the mountain of God,  
he was eased of his hardship and relieved of his toil.

At first an angel appeared before him  
to change his form into that of an angel.

Then the Lord taught him to look at fire,  
to be an expert in fiery visions.

His heart was strengthened by looking at the flame,  
so that he might be able to withstand all manner of fire.

The Pure One revealed His splendor in the midst of Egypt's defilement;  
the High One proclaimed His glory from the lowly bush ---

For his people's distress is His Distress,  
and Their salvation is His own.

Tzipporah's Flint  
Davi Walders

        Raise  
    the flint  
alone  
  
        sharpen  
cut  
        the foreskin  
    now  
  
our  
    child this  
son  
  
Gershom  
    this skin  
        his skin  
  
blood  
    our blood  
    his blood  
        by my  
  
        hand  
    holding  
        a cry  
  
    binding  
    mother  
        and  
  
        son in  
  
covenant.

## Alternative Haftarat for Va'era

### Signs, Wonders, and Faith: Or Did the Plagues Fail?

David Arnow

And the Israelites shall *know* that I, the Eternal, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians... But when Moses told this to the Israelites, they would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage.

EXODUS 6:7-9

Do the Israelites come to "know God" through the plagues? Before the cycle of signs and wonders, the Israelites' plight has only grown more desperate. The foremen of the Israelites angrily confront Moses. "May the Eternal look upon you and punish you for making us loathsome to Pharaoh and his courtiers—putting a sword in their hands to slay us" (Ex. 5:21).

Throughout the plagues, the Israelites remain mute. They neither complain when the first three plagues strike them along with the Egyptians nor rejoice when the subsequent afflictions spare them. All we hear of them is that by the time the last blow falls upon the Egyptians they've begun to follow orders. Moses tells the Israelites how they should sacrifice the paschal offering: "The people then bowed low in homage. And the Israelites went and did so, just as the Eternal had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did" (Ex. 12:27-28).

Their faithful posture doesn't last long. With the Egyptians in hot pursuit, the Israelites speak at the Red Sea for the first time since the plagues began. "And they said to Moses, 'Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness?'" (Ex. 14:11).

After the sea parts, the children of Israel seem to have changed their tune. They sing: "The Eternal is my strength and might: He has become my deliverance" (Ex. 15:2). But how enduring is their faith now?

Soon enough—three days later—they are grumbling about a lack of water and whining about the food. Manna from heaven was not sufficient. Three months later they worshiped the Golden Calf. Despite the mighty signs and wonders they witnessed, the Israelites do not come to "know god" in a lasting way.

We can explain this in several ways. Perhaps their spirits had been destroyed to the point that "knowing God" in any enduring way was impossible. Or maybe awesome signs and wonders didn't make quite the impression that God imagined they would.

Sensational acts of this sort actually represent an innovation in God's *modus operandi*. Prior to the Exodus, God's communication with the characters of Genesis was far more intimate. Even Moses' encounter with the miraculous burning bush involved a comparatively "low-key" manifestation of divine power. Maybe God thought that a crowd demanded an earthshaking display. If so, it would seem that God miscalculated.

Or maybe God was really more interested in punishing the Egyptians and humiliating their gods than in using the plagues to teach anyone anything. Maybe the goal was simply to instill fear. Perhaps God equated fear with faith. Another miscalculation.

Strange as it sounds, the Bible is full of such divine "miscalculations." God "regrets" creating the world and destroys it in a flood. Having redeemed the Israelites from Egypt, God nearly destroys them when they worship the Golden Calf. God then turn to plan B—to establish a new covenant with Moses, a deal that Moses flatly refuses.

And the idea of sending forth spies to reconnoiter the Promised Land also comes from God. It too backfires: "And the Eternal said to Moses, 'How long will the people spurn Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst?'" (Num. 14:11).

Here God painfully acknowledges the limits of trying to build a relationship based on signs and wonders. Eventually God will discover, as it were that human faith arises not from impressing us with awesome gestures, but from touching us during quiet, intimate moments of openness. And even after countless fleeting glimpses and whispering intuitions—often overlooked, forgotten, or misunderstood—the sense of God's presence consolidates only slowly.

Like the Israelites of the Exodus, how often do we find ourselves blind to the very insight that yesterday seemed so compelling? In the end, God discovers a cornerstone of rabbinic thought: "Everything is in the hand of heaven except the fear of heaven."



## Alternative Haftarat for Bo

## 1 Samuel 6:6-14

<sup>6</sup> וְלִמָּה תִּכְבְּרוּ אֶת־לִבְכֶּם כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּבְדוּ מִצְרַיִם וּפַרְעֹה  
אֶת־לִבָּם הֲלוֹא כַּאֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלֵּל בָּהֶם וַיִּשְׁלַחֵם וַיֵּלְכוּ:  
<sup>7</sup> וְעַתָּה קַחוּ וַעֲשׂוּ עֲגֹלָה חֲדָשָׁה אֶחָת וּשְׁתֵּי פָרוֹת עֲלוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה עֲלֵיהֶם עַל וַאֲסַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַפָּרוֹת בַּעֲגֹלָה  
וְהַשִּׁיבְתֶּם בְּנֵיהֶם מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם הַבַּיְתָה:  
<sup>8</sup> וְלִקְחֶתֶם אֶת־אֲרוֹן יְהוָה וְנִתַּתֶּם אֹתוֹ אֶל־הָעֲגֹלָה וְאִתּוֹ כָּל־  
הַזֶּהָב אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁבַּתְתֶּם לוֹ אֲשֶׁם תְּשִׁימוּ בָאָרֶץ מִצְדֹּו וְשִׁלַּחְתֶּם  
אֹתוֹ וְהִלֵּךְ:  
<sup>9</sup> וְרֵאִיתֶם אֶסֶד־דֶּרֶךְ גְּבוּלוֹ יַעֲלֶה בֵּית שֶׁמֶשׁ הוּא עֹשֶׂה לָנוּ  
אֶת־הָרָעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְאִם־לֹא וַיִּדְעֵנוּ כִּי לֹא יָדוּ נִגְעָה  
בְּנוֹ מִקְרָה הוּא הִיָּה לָנוּ:  
<sup>10</sup> וַיַּעֲשׂוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים כֵּן וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁתֵּי פָרוֹת עֲלוֹת וַיֹּאסְרוּם  
בַּעֲגֹלָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם כָּלוּ בַּבַּיִת:  
<sup>11</sup> וַיִּשְׁמוּ אֶת־אֲרוֹן יְהוָה אֶל־הָעֲגֹלָה וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ וְאֵת עֲכָבְרִי  
הַזֶּהָב וְאֵת צִלְמֵי טַחֲרִיהֶם:  
<sup>12</sup> וַיִּשְׁרְנֵה הַפָּרוֹת בַּדֶּרֶךְ עַל־דֶּרֶךְ בֵּית שֶׁמֶשׁ בְּמַסְלָה אֶחָת  
הָלְכוּ הַלֵּךְ וְנָעוּ וְלֹא־סָרוּ יָמִין וּשְׂמָאוֹל וְסָרְנִי פִלְשִׁתִּים  
הַלֹּכִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם עַד־גְּבוּל בֵּית שֶׁמֶשׁ:  
<sup>13</sup> וּבֵית שֶׁמֶשׁ קִצְרִים קִצְרֵי־חֲטִים בַּעֲמֶק וַיִּשְׁאוּ אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם  
וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת־הָאֲרוֹן וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ לִרְאוֹת:  
<sup>14</sup> וְהָעֲגֹלָה בָּאָה אֶל־שָׂרָה וְהוֹשַׁע בֵּית־הַשֹּׁמֵשׁ וְתַעֲמֹד שָׁם  
וְשָׁם אֲבָן גְּדוֹלָה וַיִּבְקְעוּ אֶת־עֲצֵי הָעֲגֹלָה וְאֶת־הַפָּרוֹת הָעֹלֹו  
עָלָה לִיהוָה:

<sup>6</sup> Don't harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts. As you know, when He made a mockery of them, they had to let Israel go, and they departed.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, get a new cart ready and two milch cows that have not borne a yoke; harness the cows to the cart, but take back indoors the calves that follow them.

<sup>8</sup> Take the Ark of the ETERNAL and place it on the cart; and put next to it in a chest the gold objects you are paying Him as indemnity. Send it off, and let it go its own way.

<sup>9</sup> Then watch: If it goes up the road to Beth-shemesh, to His own territory, it was He who has inflicted this great harm on us. But if not, we shall know that it was not His hand that struck us; it just happened to us by chance."

<sup>10</sup> The men did so. They took two milch cows and harnessed them to the cart, and shut up their calves indoors.

<sup>11</sup> They placed the Ark of the ETERNAL on the cart together with the chest, the golden mice, and the figures of their hemorrhoids.

<sup>12</sup> The cows went straight ahead along the road to Beth-shemesh. They went along a single highroad, lowing as they went, and turning off neither to the right nor to the left; and the lords of the Philistines walked behind them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.

<sup>13</sup> The people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. They looked up and saw the Ark, and they rejoiced when they saw *it*.

<sup>14</sup> The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and it stopped there. They split up the wood of the cart and presented the cows as a burnt offering to the ETERNAL. A large stone was there.

## Ezra 6:16-22

<sup>16</sup> וַעֲבָדוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּהֲנֵיָא וְלוֹיָא וְשָׂאֵר בְּנֵי־גִלּוּתָא חֲנֻכַּת  
בֵּית־אֱלֹהֵא דָנָה בְּחֻדָּהָ: <sup>17</sup> וַהֲקִרְבוּ לַחֲנֻכַּת בֵּית־אֱלֹהֵא דָנָה  
תּוֹרִין מֵאֵה דְכָרִין מֵאַתִּין אֲמִרִין אַרְבַּע מֵאָה וּצְפִירֵי עֶזְרָא  
(לַחֲטִיָּא) [לַחֲטִיָּא] עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּרֵי־עָשָׂר לַמִּנָּן שְׁבַטֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

<sup>18</sup> וַהֲקִימוּ כֹהֲנֵיָא בְּפִלְגְתָּהוֹן וְלוֹיָא בְּמַחֲלַקְתָּהוֹן עַל־עֲבִידַת  
אֱלֹהֵא דִּין בִּירוּשָׁלַם כַּכְתָּב סֵפֶר מֹשֶׁה:  
<sup>19</sup> וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־הַגּוֹלָה אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּאַרְבַּעַה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן:  
<sup>20</sup> כִּי הִטְהָרוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם כָּאֶחָד כָּלֶם טְהוֹרִים וַיִּשְׁחָטוּ  
הַפֶּסַח לְכָל־בְּנֵי הַגּוֹלָה וְלֹאֲחֵיהֶם הַכֹּהֲנִים וְלֵהֶם:  
<sup>21</sup> וַיֹּאכְלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַשָּׁבִיִּם מִהַגּוֹלָה וְכָל הַנִּבְדֵּל מִטְּמֵאֵת  
גּוֹי־הָאָרֶץ אֱלֹהֵם לְדָרֶשׁ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
<sup>22</sup> וַיַּעֲשׂוּ חַג־מִצּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בְּשִׂמְחָה כִּי שִׂמְחָה יְהוָה  
וְהֵסֵב לֵב מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר עֲלֵיהֶם לְחֻזֵּק יְדֵיהֶם בְּמִלְאֶכֶת  
בֵּית־הָאֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

<sup>16</sup> The Israelites, the priests, and the Levites, and all the other exiles celebrated the dedication of the House of God with joy.

<sup>17</sup> And they sacrificed for the dedication of this House of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and twelve goats as a purification offering for all of Israel, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

<sup>18</sup> They appointed the priests in their courses and the Levites in their divisions for the service of God in Jerusalem, according to the prescription in the Book of Moses.

<sup>19</sup> The returned exiles celebrated the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month,  
<sup>20</sup> for the priests and Levites had purified themselves to a man; they were all pure. They slaughtered the passover offering for all the returned exiles, and for their brother priests and for themselves.

<sup>21</sup> The children of Israel who had returned from the exile, together with all who joined them in separating themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the lands to worship the Eternal God of Israel, ate of it.

<sup>22</sup> They joyfully celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days, for the Eternal had given them cause for joy by inclining the heart of the Assyrian king toward them so as to give them support in the work of the House of God, the God of Israel.

## The Commentators' Struggle

### David Arnov

Commentators have long labored to justify God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Some have stressed the fact that initially Pharaoh seemed to harden his own heart. God only stepped in to strengthen the decision Pharaoh had freely made. One can see this as an exception that proves the rule that God does not interfere with human free will. But the volume of commentary on this theme points to its difficulty.

*For I have hardened his heart* (Ex. 10:1)... Rabbi Johanan said: "Does this not provide heretics with ground for arguing that he had not means of repenting, since it says, '*For I have hardened his heart?*'" To which Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish replied: "Let the mouths of the heretics be stopped up... When God warns a man once, twice, and even a third time and he still does not repent, then does God close his heart against repentance so He should exact vengeance from him for his sins." Thus, it was for wicked Pharaoh.

Exodus Rabbah (13:3)

*And I will harden...* (Ex. 7:3)... since he dealt wickedly and offered resistance against Me, and it is manifest before Me that there is no delight among the nations to set their whole heart to repentance, it is better that his heart be hardened in order to increase through him My signs, and you will recognize my might... Nevertheless, as regards the first five plagues it is not stated, "*And Adonai hardened the heart of Pharaoh,*" but "*and Pharaoh's heart was hardened.*"

Rashi

There are some verses that lead people to fancy that God preordains and compels disobedience. This is false... Rather, whoever is bad is so by his own choice. If he wishes to be virtuous, he can be so; there is nothing preventing him... [God's] saying "*And I will harden Pharaoh's heart*"—and then punishing him and destroying him—contains a subject for discussion and a major principle stems from it... If Pharaoh and his followers had committed no other sin than not letting Israel go free, the matter would undoubtedly be problematic, for He had prevented them from setting Israel free... However, the matter is not like this, but rather Pharaoh and his followers disobeyed by choice, without force or compulsion. He oppressed the foreigners who were in their midst and treated them with sheer injustice... This action was due to their choice and to the evil character of their thought; there was nothing compelling them to do it. God punished them for it by preventing them from repenting so that the punishment which His justice required would befall them.

Maimonides

Nowhere in the Bible is the fact of human freedom questioned, apart from the episode where God hardens Pharaoh's heart... But the Pharaoh episode is precisely the exception that proves the rule, for the biblical account assumes that under all normal conditions Pharaoh too would be free to release the Israelites. This is not a normal situation because God has a broader purpose to accomplish. That's why God has to intervene directly to limit Pharaoh's freedom. It takes a specific divine intervention to rob Pharaoh of his freedom—so much is freedom a natural part of the order of creation.

Neil Gillman

The final decision always rests with man. At the beginning, however, man is free to choose any path of action he so desires. He is afforded equal opportunity to do good or evil. But as soon as he has made his first choice, then the opportunities are no longer so evenly balanced. The more he persists in the first path of his choosing, shall we say, the evil path, the harder will it become for him to revert to the good path, even though his essential freedom of choice is not affected. In other words, it is not the Almighty who has hampered his freedom and made the path of repentance difficult. He has, by his own choice and persistence in evil, placed obstacles in the way of leading back to reformation.

Nehama Leibowitz

In Pharaoh's case, not listening becomes a fatal reflex, closing him to vulnerability and to growth. Nevertheless, it is based on a horror and a desire that are not alien to human experience. The process by which he moves from hardening his own heart to God's hardening his heart (in general terms, this happens after the first five plagues) is essentially a mysterious one. A stamina of endurance possesses Pharaoh: to the bystander, there is an unnatural, compulsive quality about his refusal that is... [as others have suggested] the idiomatic meaning of the formula: "God hardened Pharaoh's heart": where God is described as the cause of human emotional response, the effect is to suggest an unaccountable human reaction. On such a reading, Pharaoh increasingly strikes the reader with a kind of fascination as he compulsively resists the bombardment that should have defeated him. What demonic strength possesses him? "I shall strengthen his heart," "God made his heart impenetrable": These expressions only serve to underline the mystery of human self-destruction.

Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg

Maggid  
Marge Piercy

The courage to let go of the door, the handle.  
The courage to shed the familiar walls whose very  
stains and leaks are comfortable as the little moles  
of the upper arm; stains that recall a feast,  
a child's naughtiness, a loud blattering storm  
that slapped the roof hard, pouring through.

The courage to abandon the graves dug into the hill,  
the small bones of children and the brittle bones  
of the old whose marrow hunger had stolen;  
the courage to desert the tree planted and only  
begun to bear; the riverside where promises were  
shaped; the streets where their empty pots were broken.

The courage to leave the place whose language you learned  
as early as your own, whose customs however dan-  
gerous or demeaning, bind you like a halter  
you have learned to pull inside, to move your load;  
the land fertile with the blood spilled on it;  
the roads mapped and annotated for survival.

The courage to walk out of the pain that is know  
into the pain that cannot be imagined,  
mapless, walking into the wilderness, going  
barefoot with a canteen into the desert;  
stuffed in the stinking hold of a rotting ship  
sailing off the map into dragon's mouths,

Cathay, India, Siberia, goldenh medina,  
leaving bodies by the way like abandoned treasure.  
so they walked out of Egypt. So they bribed their way  
out of Russia under loads of straw; so they steamed  
out of the bloody smoking charnelhouse of Europe  
on overloaded freighters forbidden all ports—

out of pain into death or freedom or different  
painful dignity; into squalor and politics.  
We Jews are all born of wanderers, with shoes  
under our pillows and a memory of blood that is ours  
raining down. We honor only those Jews who changed  
tonight, those who chose the desert over bondage.

Who walked into the strange and became strangers  
And gave birth to children who could look down  
on them standing on their shoulders for having  
been slaves. We honor those who let go of every-  
thing but freedom, who ran, who revolted, who fought,  
who became other by saving themselves.



## Alternative Haftarah For Beshalach

Isaiah 49:10-14

<sup>10</sup> לֹא יִרְעָבוּ וְלֹא יִצְמָאוּ וְלֹא יִשְׁמַשׁ שָׁרֵב וְשֶׁמֶשׁ כִּי־מִרְחָמָם  
 יְנַהֲגֵם וְעַל־מְבוּעֵי מַיִם יְנַהֲלֵם: <sup>11</sup> וְשִׁמְתִּי כָל־הָרִי לְדֶרֶךְ  
 וּמִסְלָתִי יִרְמֹוּ:  
<sup>12</sup> הִנֵּה־אֵלֶּה מֵרָחוֹק יָבֹאוּ וְהִנֵּה־אֵלֶּה מִצָּפוֹן וּמִיָּם וְאֵלֶּה  
 מֵאֲרֵץ סִינִים:  
<sup>13</sup> רִנּוּ שָׁמַיִם וְגִילִי אֲרֶץ (וּפְצֹחוּ) הָרִים רִנּוּ כִּי־נִתְּם  
 יְהוָה עָמֹו וַעֲנִיו יְרַחֵם:

<sup>10</sup> They shall not hunger or thirst, Hot wind and sun shall not strike them; For He who  
 loves them will lead them, He will guide them to springs of water.

<sup>11</sup> I will make all My mountains a road, And My highways shall be built up.

<sup>12</sup> Look! These are coming from afar, These from the north and the west, And these from  
 the land of Sinim.

<sup>13</sup> Shout, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth! Break into shouting, O hills! For the Eternal  
 has comforted His people, And has taken back His afflicted ones in love.

וַיֹּצִיאוּ אֹתָהֶם לָאֹמֶר פְּרָאוֹתְכֶם אֶת אֲרֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה  
אֲלֵהֶיכֶם וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם נֹשְׂאִים אֹתוֹ וְאַתֶּם תִּסָּעוּ

מִפְּקֻדְמֹכֶם וְהַלְכֶתֶם אַחֲרָיו:

<sup>4</sup> אָז יָחֹךְ יְהִי בֵּינֵיכֶם (וַיִּבְנוּ) [וַיִּבְנוּ] כְּאֻלְפִים אִמּוֹ  
בַּמִּדֶּה אֶל־תִּקְרָבִי אֲלֵי לָמַעַן אֲשֶׁר־תִּדְרְעוּ אֶת־הַיָּרֵךְ אֲשֶׁר

תִּלְכֹּבֶנָּה כִּי לֹא עֲבַדְתֶּם בַּיָּרֵךְ מִתְּמֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם: <sup>5</sup>

<sup>6</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־הָעָם הַתְּקַדְּשׁוּ כִּי מָחָר יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה

בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וּנְפֹלְאוֹת:

<sup>7</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים לֵאמֹר שֹׂאוּ אֶת־אֲרֹן הַבְּרִית

וַעֲבֹדוּ לִפְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשָּׂאוּ אֶת־אֲרֹן הַבְּרִית וַיֵּלְכוּ לִפְנֵי הָעָם:

<sup>8</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶחָד גִּבְלֹךְ בִּיעֲנִי  
כִּלְי־יִטְרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִדְעוּן כִּי פֶּאֶשֶׁר הָיִיתִי עִם־מֹשֶׁה אֹהֵי

עַמִּי:

<sup>9</sup> וְאַתָּה תַּצִּיחַ אֶת־הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי אֲרֹן־הַבְּרִית לֵאמֹר כִּבְּאֻכְךָ

עַד־קֶצֶה מִי הַיָּרֵךְ בַּיָּרֵךְ תַּעֲמֹדוּ: <sup>10</sup> פ

<sup>11</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל נָשׂוּ הַיּוֹם וְשִׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבַר־

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

<sup>12</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בּוֹאֵת תִּדְרְעוּן כִּי אֵל הוּא בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהוֹרֵשׁ

וְאֶת־הַנִּגְלֶשֶׁת וְהָאֹמֶר וְהַיָּבוֹס:

<sup>13</sup> הַיּוֹם אֲרֹן הַבְּרִית אֲרֹן כָּל־הָאָרֶץ עֹבֵר לִפְנֵיכֶם בַּיָּרֵךְ:

<sup>14</sup> וַעֲשֵׂה קִלְיוֹ לָכֶם שֹׁנֵי עֹשֶׂר אִישׁ מִשְׁבָּטִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ־אֶחָד

אִישׁ־אֶחָד לִשְׁבָּט:

<sup>15</sup> וְהָיָה כִּנְסֵה כְּנֹת פָּפוֹת הַנָּלִי הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי אֲרֹן וְהָיָה אֲרֹן

כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בְּמִי הַיָּרֵךְ מִי הַיָּרֵךְ יִכְרַחֲנוּ הַיָּמִים הַיָּדִידִים

מִלְמַעְלָה וַיַּעֲמֻוּ גַּד אֶחָד:

<sup>16</sup> וְהָיָה כִּנְסֵה הָעָם מֵאֲהֲלֵיהֶם לְעֹבֵר אֶת־הַיָּרֵךְ וְהַכֹּהֲנִים

נֹשְׂאֵי הָאֲרֹן הַבְּרִית לִפְנֵי הָעָם:

<sup>17</sup> וַיִּכְבּוּ נֹשְׂאֵי הָאֲרֹן עַד־הַיָּרֵךְ וְהַנָּלִי הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי

הָאֲרֹן נִטְפְּלוּ בַּקֶּצֶה הַיָּמִים וְהַיָּרֵךְ מָלֵא עַל־כָּל־גְּדֻלָּתוֹ כֹּל

יָמֵי קִצְיָר:

<sup>18</sup> וַיַּעֲמֻוּ הַיָּמִים הַיָּרֵךְִים מִלְמַעְלָה קָמוּ גַד־אֶחָד הַרְחֹק

מֵאֵד (בְּאֵדָם) [מֵאֵדָם] הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר מִצֵּד צִרְחָן וְהַיָּדִידִים עַל

יָם הָעֲרָבָה יִסְדּוּ מִלַּח תָּמוּ נִכְרְתוּ וְהָעָם עָבְרוּ נֹגַד יִרְיָחוֹ:  
<sup>17</sup> וַיַּעֲמֵדּוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים נִשְׂאֵי הָאָרֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה בַּחֲרֻבָּה בַּחוּץ  
 הַיִּרְדֵּן הָכֵן וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹבְרִים בַּחֲרֻבָּה עַד אֲשֶׁר־תָּמוּ  
 כָּל־הַגּוֹי לַעֲבֹר אֶת־הַיִּרְדֵּן:

<sup>18</sup> וַיְהִי כֹאֲשֶׁר־תָּמוּ כָל־הַגּוֹי לַעֲבֹר אֶת־הַיִּרְדֵּן  
 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר:

<sup>2</sup> קָחוּ לָכֶם מִן־הָעָם שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר אָנָשִׁים אִישׁ־אֶחָד אִישׁ־אֶחָד  
 מִשִּׁבְטִי:

<sup>3</sup> וַיָּצִיאוּ אוֹתָם לֵאמֹר שְׂאוּ־לָכֶם מִזֶּה מִחוּץ הַיִּרְדֵּן מִמַּצֵּב  
 הַגָּלִי הַכֹּהֲנִים הָכֵן שְׁתֵּים־עָשָׂרָה אַבְנִים וְהַעֲבַרְתֶּם אוֹתָם  
 עִמָּכֶם וְהִנַּחְתֶּם אוֹתָם בְּמַלְּוֹן אֲשֶׁר־תֵּלִינוּ בּוֹ הַלַּיְלָה:

<sup>19</sup> וְהָעָם עָלוּ מִן־הַיִּרְדֵּן בַּעֲשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּגִלְגָּל  
 בְּקֶצֶה מִזֵּרַח יִרְיָחוֹ:<sup>20</sup> וְאֵת שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂרָה הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה  
 אֲשֶׁר לָקְחוּ מִן־הַיִּרְדֵּן הָקִים יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּגִלְגָּל:

<sup>21</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאָלוּן בְּנֵיכֶם מָחָר  
 אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם לֵאמֹר מָה הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה:

<sup>22</sup> וְהוֹדַעְתֶּם אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר בִּיבִשָּׁה עָבַר יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 אֶת־הַיִּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה:

<sup>23</sup> אֲשֶׁר־הוֹבִישׁ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֶת־מִי הַיִּרְדֵּן מִפְּנֵיכֶם  
 עַד־עֲבָרְכֶם כֹּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לַיַּם־סוּף  
 אֲשֶׁר־הוֹבִישׁ מִפְּנֵינוּ עַד־עֲבָרְנוּ:

<sup>24</sup> לְמַעַן דַּעַת כָּל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ אֶת־יַד יְהוָה כִּי חֲזָקָה הִיא  
 לְמַעַן יֵרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כָּל־הַיָּמִים:

<sup>3</sup> And (the officials) charged the people as follows: "When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the ETERNAL your God being borne by the levitical priests, you shall move forward. Follow it -

<sup>4</sup> but keep a distance of some two thousand cubits from it, never coming any closer to it -- so that you may know by what route to march, since it is a road you have not traveled before."

<sup>5</sup> And Joshua said to the people, "Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the ETERNAL will perform wonders in your midst."

<sup>6</sup> Then Joshua ordered the priests, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant and advance to the head of the people." And they took up the Ark of the Covenant and marched at the head of the people.

<sup>7</sup> The ETERNAL said to Joshua, "This day, for the first time, I will exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they shall know that I will be with you as I was with Moses.

<sup>8</sup> For your part, command the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant as follows: When you reach the edge of the waters of the Jordan, make a halt in the Jordan."

<sup>9</sup> And Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come closer and listen to the words of the ETERNAL your God.

<sup>10</sup> By this," Joshua continued, "you shall know that a living God is among you, and that He will dispossess for you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites:

<sup>11</sup> the Ark of the Covenant of the Sovereign of all the earth is advancing before you into the Jordan.

<sup>12</sup> Now select twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from each tribe.

<sup>13</sup> When the feet of the priests bearing the Ark of the ETERNAL, the Sovereign of all the earth, come to rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan -- the water coming from upstream -- will be cut off and will stand in a single heap."

<sup>14</sup> When the people set out from their encampment to cross the Jordan, the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant were at the head of the people.

<sup>15</sup> Now the Jordan keeps flowing over its entire bed throughout the harvest season. But as soon as the bearers of the Ark reached the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the Ark dipped into the water at its edge,

<sup>16</sup> the waters coming down from upstream piled up in a single heap a great way off, at Adam, the town next to Zarethan; and those flowing away downstream to the Sea of the Arabah (the Dead Sea) ran out completely. So the people crossed near Jericho.

<sup>17</sup> The priests who bore the Ark of the ETERNAL's Covenant stood on dry land exactly in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed over on dry land, until the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

<sup>4:1</sup> When the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the ETERNAL said to Joshua,

<sup>2</sup> "Select twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe,

<sup>3</sup> and instruct them as follows: Pick up twelve stones from the spot exactly in the middle of the Jordan, where the priests' feet are standing; take them along with you and deposit them in the place where you will spend the night."

<sup>19</sup> The people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho.

<sup>20</sup> And Joshua set up in Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken from the Jordan.

<sup>21</sup> He charged the Israelites as follows: "In time to come, when your children ask their fathers, 'What is the meaning of those stones?'

<sup>22</sup> tell your children: 'Here the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry land.'

<sup>23</sup> For the ETERNAL your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you crossed, just as the ETERNAL your God did to the Sea of Reeds, which He dried up before us until we crossed.

<sup>24</sup> Thus all the peoples of the earth shall know how mighty is the hand of the ETERNAL,  
and you shall fear the ETERNAL your God always."

## Isaiah 63:7-14

<sup>7</sup>חֲסִדֵי יְהוָה אֶזְכִּיר תְּהִלַּת יְהוָה כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-גָּמְלָנוּ  
יְהוָה וְרַב-טוֹב לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר-גָּמְלָם כְּרַחֲמָיו וְכִרְבּ  
חֲסִדָּיו:

<sup>8</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר אֶדְ-עַמִּי הֲמָה בָּנִים לֹא יִשְׁקְרוּ וַיְהִי לָהֶם לְמוֹשִׁיעַ:  
<sup>9</sup>בְּכָל-צָרָתָם (לֹא) [לֹא] צָר וּמִלֶּאךָ פָּנָיו הוֹשִׁיעָם בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ  
וּבְחַמְלָתוֹ הוּא גָּאֹלָם וַיִּנְשָׂאֵם כָּל-יְמֵי עוֹלָם:  
<sup>10</sup>וְהִמָּה מָרוּ וַעֲצְבוּ אֶת־רוּחַ קִדְשׁוֹ וַיִּהְפֹּךְ לָהֶם לְאוֹיֵב הוּא  
נִלְחַם-בָּם:

<sup>11</sup>וַיִּזְכֹּר יְמֵי-עוֹלָם מִשָּׁה עִמּוֹ אֵיךְ הִמְעַלְם מִיָּם אֶת רַעִי  
צִאֲנוּ אֵיךְ הָשֵׁם בִּקְרָבֹו אֶת־רוּחַ קִדְשׁוֹ:

<sup>12</sup>מוֹלִיד לִימִין מִשָּׁה זָרוּעַ תְּפָאֲרָתוֹ בּוֹקֵעַ מִיָּם מִפְּנֵיהֶם  
לַעֲשׂוֹת לֹו שֵׁם עוֹלָם:

<sup>13</sup>מוֹלִיכֶם בְּתַהֲמוֹת כְּסוּס בַּמִּדְבָּר לֹא יִכְשְׁלוּ:

<sup>14</sup>כִּבְהֵמָה בִּבְקָעָה תִרְדּוּ רוּחַ יְהוָה תְּנִיחֵנוּ כֵּן נִהְיֶנָּה עֲמֹד  
לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ שֵׁם תְּפָאֲרָת:

<sup>7</sup> I will recount the kind acts of the Eternal, The praises of the Eternal -- For all that the  
Eternal has wrought for us, The vast bounty to the House of Israel That He bestowed  
upon them According to His mercy and His great kindness.

<sup>8</sup> He thought: Surely they are My people, Children who will not play false. So He was  
their Deliverer.

<sup>9</sup> In all their troubles He was troubled, And the angel of His Presence delivered them. In  
His love and pity He Himself redeemed them, Raised them, and exalted them All the  
days of old.

<sup>10</sup> But they rebelled, and grieved His holy spirit; Then He became their enemy, And  
Himself made war against them.

<sup>11</sup> Then they remembered the ancient days, Him, who pulled His people out *of the water*:

"Where is He who brought them up from the Sea Along with the shepherd of His flock?

Where is He who put In their midst His holy spirit.

<sup>12</sup> Who made His glorious arm March at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters  
before them To make Himself a name for all time.

<sup>13</sup> Who led them through the deeps So that they did not stumble -- As a horse in a desert,

<sup>14</sup> Like a beast descending to the plain?" 'Twas the spirit of the Eternal gave them rest;

Thus did You shepherd Your people To win for Yourself a glorious name.



## The Three Factions

### Joseph Albardani

As they were leaving Egypt, pursued by Pharaoh himself, His people divided into three factions. But when the waves of the sea engulfed Egypt's armies, they all sang to His name: *'The Lord, the warrior - Lord is his name!'*

The first faction spoke up: 'Let us drown in the seething waters.' They insisted: 'Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercy is great.' But Moses, the servant of the Lord, replied: *'Stand firm and see the lord's deliverance.'*

The second faction wanted them to go back to Egypt, back to servitude and the yoke. To them the Eternal spoke: 'I shall strike down the Egyptians before you.' And Moses, the pure one, said to them: 'What you wish is worst of all; *but as sure as you see the Egyptians now, you will never see them again.'*

The third faction proposed: 'Let us give battle in the sea and abase them; our standards will rage above their necks!' To them the humble Moses said: 'Rather extol God's wonders; *The Lord will fight for you; so you hold Your peace.'*

Thus did the noble people split up into three factions, the one saying: 'Let us head back for Egypt'; the other: 'Let us drown in the sea'; and the last: 'Let us give them battle'. To all of which the humble one joyfully replied: *'The right hand of the Lord raises up!'*

Miriam the Speechwriter  
Janet Ruth Falon

Moses, awkward, chose to be mute  
Aaron delivered  
but it was Miriam who put words in the mouth  
words that flowed like honey of bees that sting  
sweet enough to make the message palatable  
thick enough to spread through the crowd  
sufficiently golden to reflect  
    and remind of the calf.  
Miriam the speechwriter is remembered most for dancing  
but she was the one who gave voice  
who swallowed the clouds and spit them out in letters  
who translated God to people  
and moved them to reconsider  
    and to tears.  
A woman's words, once again, ghostly and potent  
A woman's voice, once again, silent and still.

## Alternative Haftarat for Yitro

## 2 Kings 23:1-5

וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאסְפוּ אֵלָיו כָּל־זִקְנֵי יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם:  
 וַיַּעַל הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּית־יְהוָה וְכָל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וְכָל־יֹשְׁבֵי יִירוּשָׁלַם  
 אֹתוֹ וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַנְּבִיאִים וְכָל־הָעָם לְמִקְטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל וַיִּקְרָא  
 בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית הַנִּמְצָא בְּבֵית יְהוָה:  
 וַיַּעֲמֵד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־הָעַמּוּד וַיִּכְרֹת אֶת־הַבְּרִית לִפְנֵי יְהוָה  
 לְלַכֵּת אַחֵר יְהוָה וּלְשָׁמֵר מִצְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־עֲדוּתָיו וְאֶת־הַקְּתָיו  
 בְּכָל־לֵב וּבְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ לְהִקְיֹם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת  
 הַכְּתוּבִים עַל־הַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה וַיַּעֲמֵד כָּל־הָעָם בְּבְרִית:  
 וַיִּצְוֶה הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־חִלְקִיָּהוּ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת־כֹּהֲנֵי הַמִּשְׁנָה  
 וְאֶת־שָׁמְרֵי הַסֵּף לְהוֹצִיא מֵהֵיכַל יְהוָה אֵת כָּל־הַכֵּלִים  
 הָעֲשׂוּיִם לַבַּעַל וּלְאֲשֵׁרָה וּלְכָל צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּשְׂרֹפֵם מִחוּץ  
 לְיִירוּשָׁלַם בְּשָׂדֵמוֹת קִדְרוֹן וְנָשָׂא אֶת־עֹפְרָם בֵּית־אֵל:  
 וְהַשְׁבִּית אֶת־הַכִּמְרִים אֲשֶׁר נָתַנוּ מַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה וַיִּקְטְרוּ  
 בְּבָמֹת בְּעֵרֵי יְהוּדָה וּמִסְבֵּי יִירוּשָׁלַם וְאֶת־הַמִּקְטָרִים לַבַּעַל  
 לְשֶׁשׁ וּלְיִזְרָח וּלְמִגְזֹלֹת וּלְכָל צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם:

<sup>1</sup> At the king's summons, all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem assembled before him.

<sup>2</sup> The king went up to the House of the ETERNAL, together with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and prophets -- all the people, young and old. And he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll which had been found in the House of the ETERNAL.

<sup>3</sup> The king stood by the pillar and solemnized the covenant before the ETERNAL: that they would follow the ETERNAL and observe His commandments, His injunctions, and His laws with all their heart and soul; that they would fulfill all the terms of this covenant as inscribed upon the scroll. And all the people entered into the covenant.

<sup>4</sup> Then the king ordered the high priest Hilkiyah, the priests of the second rank, and the guards of the threshold to bring out of the Temple of the ETERNAL all the objects made

for Baal and Asherah and all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and he removed the ashes to Bethel.

<sup>5</sup> He suppressed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to make offerings at the shrines in the towns of Judah and in the environs of Jerusalem, and those who made offerings to Baal, to the sun and moon and constellations -- all the host of heaven.

Thou Hast Chosen Us  
A.M Klein

Thou hast chosen us from among all nations,

And Thou hast loved us, and lavished favour on us

Oy, gewald! Oy, gewald!

And Thou hast raised us above all nations,

And with Thy laws hast blessed and hallowed us

Oy, gewald! Oy, gewald!

Hast raised us above all peoples; and with Thy precepts

Sanctified us, with Thy Holy Law!

Oy, gewald! Oy, gewald!

## Chosenness, Hierarchy, and Difference

### Judith Plaskow

... We must examine further those ideas that have contributed to Judaism's long history of conceptualizing difference in terms of hierarchical separations. The suspicion and ranking of difference are not things Jews learned from other peoples; they have been aspects of Judaism since its beginnings. Thinking of itself as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation," the Jewish people understood its own holiness partly in contradistinction to the beliefs and behavior of surrounding nations. Serving the Lord meant shunning and destroying foreign gods and morality, thus refusing the "snare" of a different religious system (Ex. 23:23-33). Paralleling external differentiation were a host of internal separations that set apart distinct and unequal objects, states, and modes of being. On a religious level, to be a holy people was both to be different from one's neighbors and to distinguish between and differently honor pure and impure, Sabbath and week, kosher and non-kosher, Cohen, Levi, and Israel... and male and female...

It is the notion of chosenness that is the chief expression of hierarchical separation and therefore the most important focus for discussion. As a central category for Jewish self-understanding that is emblematic of other gradations, chosenness provides a warrant and a model for ranked differentiation within the community and between Israel and others. If Jewish feminism is to articulate a model of community in which difference is acknowledged without being hierarchalized, it will have to engage the traditional Jewish understanding of difference by rejecting the idea of chosenness without at the same time denying the distinctiveness of Israel as a religious community.

Chosenness is a complex and evolving idea in Judaism that is not always associated with claims to superiority. There is a strand in Jewish thinking that attributes

chosenness to special qualities in the Jews and that argues for Jewish hereditary spiritual uniqueness and supremacy; by and large, however, Israel's election is viewed not as a matter of merit or attributes, but of responsibilities and duties. When the notion of chosenness first appears in the Bible simultaneously with the establishment of the Israel as a covenant community, there is no apparent motive for Israel's special status but God's steadfast love and (itself unexplained) earlier promise to the patriarchs (Deut. 7:7-8). Israel's standing as God's "own possession among all peoples" (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6) is linked to acceptance and observance of the covenant; this constitutes its specialness in its own eyes and in the eyes of others (Deut. 4:5-7). When Deutero-Isaiah shifts emphasis from election of Israel as holy community to election of Israel as servant to the world, he still gives no reason for God's selection. This prophet of exile calls Israel "a light to the nations" and interprets its suffering as a sign of chosenness and future redemption (Isa. 49:6; 53); but election is marked by suffering, not by exaltation.

If ascription of supernatural sanctity to Israel is the exception rather than the rule, however, this eliminates only some of the troubling aspects of the notion of chosenness. When election is understood as obligation or taken for granted as the foundation of the halakhic life, the privileged nature of Israel's relationship to God remains even while explicit claims to superiority are absent. After all, the traditional male Jew who each morning blesses God for not making him a woman is said to be giving thanks for the special burden and responsibility of halakhic observance, rather than deliberately vaunting his prerogatives. But however humbly he accepts his legal burden, his prayer nonetheless presupposes that women are exempt from halakhic responsibility, that the other side of his privilege is their exclusion. This same dichotomy applies to the gift of

chosenness which is similarly acknowledged in the morning blessings. The Jew is grateful to be a Jew because the burden of Jewishness is a boon and privilege others do not share. As the daily liturgy makes amply clear, the lot of the Jews is singular; their special destiny is God's unique choice...

The purpose of a feminist critique of chosenness and redefinition of Israel is not to truncate Jewish spirituality but to liberate it from its connection with hierarchical dualisms. So long as the Jewish people holds onto a self-understanding that perpetuates graded distinctions within the community, Jewish spirituality will be defined by and limited to a small proportion of Jews. Women, the unlearned, mamzerim (basterds—that is those born of forbidden unions) and others will be excluded from the relationship with God that comes through full participation in community... Only a Jewish community that permits and desires its members to be present in their particularity and totality can know in its fullness the relationship to God that it claims at its center.

What must replace chosenness, then, as the model for Jewish self-understanding is the far less dramatic "distinctness." The Jewish community and the subcommunities, are distinct and distinctive. Jewish experience has been variously shaped by gender, by place of dispersion, by language, by history, by interaction with other cultures. Just as the total Jewish experience of Jewish subgroups have taken place in some relation to a larger Jewish life and self-understanding. The term distinctness suggests, however, that the relation between these various communities—Jewish to non-Jews, Jewish to Jewish—should be understood not in terms of hierarchical differentiation but in terms of part and whole... Jewish women, Sephardim, Ashkenazim, Paradesim, Malabarim



(groups of Jews in Cochin, India) are part of the larger Jewish community as Jews are part of a larger heterogeneous culture...

To be wholly present in our lives in all our power is to touch the greater power of being that is the final unity within which all particulars dwell. To deny our complex particularity, as individuals or communities, is to diminish our connection to the God known in and through the experience of empowered selfhood...A Jewish community that defines itself by walling itself off from others without and within marshals strength at its boundaries to the detriment of the center. It nourishes selves that must deny parts of themselves and thus cannot bring their uniqueness to the enrichment of a common life. To create Jewish communities that value particularity is to create places where Jews in their complex wholeness can bring their full power to the upbuilding of Jewish community and the other communities in which Jews dwell. It is not in the chosenness that cuts off but in the distinctiveness that opens itself to difference that we find the God of Israel and of each and every person.

Before Your Wonders I Stand, My World  
Shimon Halkin

Before your wonders I stand, my world,  
And know not yet to whom my blood sings:  
Each day miracle blooms, sunrose anew,  
Evening glides soft and deepens evening blame.

Before your wonders I stand, my world,  
Who are you? My blood convulses as I envision you.  
Somnambulist night is my life: alone, tremulous I wander.  
Still earth starts my sap and sky grows fair.

Before your wonders I stand, my world.  
Pray — reveal yourself, oh you, to whom my blood cries out!  
Like a star from the mountain, deliverance looks to me:  
Pray — reveal yourself, my bereaved soul is weary.

## Alternative Haftarat for Mishpatim

Nehemiah 8:1-3; Nehemiah 9:1-13

<sup>1</sup> וַיֹּאסְפוּ כָל־הָעָם כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד אֶל־הַרְחוֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמַּיִם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לַעֲזֹרָא הַסֹּפֵר לְהֵבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

<sup>2</sup> וַיָּבִיֵא עֲזֵרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה לִפְנֵי הַקָּהָל מֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה וְכָל מִבֵּין לִשְׁמֹעַ בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי: <sup>3</sup> וַיִּקְרְאוּ לִפְנֵי הַרְחוֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמַּיִם מִן־הָאוֹר עַד־מַחֲצִית הַיּוֹם נָגִיד הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַמְּבִינִים וְאֲזַנֵּי כָל־הָעָם אֶל־סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה:

<sup>1</sup> וּבַיּוֹם עֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ הָיָה נֹאסְפוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּצוּם וּבִשְׁקִים וְאֲדָמָה עֲלֵיהֶם:

<sup>2</sup> וַיִּבְדְּלוּ זֶרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל בְּנֵי נָכָר וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עַל־חַטֹּאתֵיהֶם וְעוֹנוֹת אֲבֹתֵיהֶם:

<sup>3</sup> וַיִּקְוֹמוּ עַל־עַמּוּדָם וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֵּפֶר תּוֹרַת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם רַבְעִית הַיּוֹם וּרְבִיעִית מִתּוֹדִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִיִּים לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם: פ

<sup>4</sup> וַיָּקָם עַל־מַעְלָה הַלְוִיִּם יִשׁוּעַ וּבְנֵי קַדְמִיָּאל שְׁבִנְיָה בְנֵי שְׂרָבְיָה בְנֵי כַנְנִי וַיַּעֲקֹוּ בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

<sup>5</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַלְוִיִּם יִשׁוּעַ וְקַדְמִיָּאל בְנֵי הַשְּׁבִנְיָה שְׂרָבְיָה הוֹדִיָּה שְׁבִנְיָה פִתְחִיהָ קוֹמוּ בָּרְכוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם וַיְבָרְכוּ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדָךְ וּמְרוֹמָם עַל־כָּל־בְּרָכָה וַתְּהַלֵּל:

<sup>6</sup> אֲתָה־הוּא יְהוָה לְבַדְּךָ (אֵת) (נֹאֲתָה) עֲשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם שָׁמַי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל־צִבְאָם הָאָרֶץ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיהָ הַיָּמִים וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶם וְאַתָּה מַחֲיָה אֶת־כָּל־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְצִבְאָ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְךָ מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיִּים:

<sup>7</sup> אֲתָה־הוּא יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ בְּאַבְרָם וְהוֹצֵאתוֹ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים וְשָׂמַת שְׁמוֹ אַבְרָהָם:

<sup>8</sup> וּמִצָּאתָ אֶת־לִבָּבוֹ נֹאמֵן לִפְנֶיךָ וּכְרוֹת עִמּוֹ הַבְּרִית לָתֵת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי הַחֲתִי הָאֲמֹרִי וְהַפְּרָזִי וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהַגְּרָזִי לָתֵת לְזֵרְעוֹ וְתָקָם אֶת־דְּבָרְךָ כִּי צִדִּיק אַתָּה:

<sup>9</sup> וַתֵּרָא אֶת־עֲנֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ בַּמִּצְרִים וְאֶת־זַעֲקָתָם שָׁמַעְתָּ עַל־יַם־סוּף:

<sup>10</sup> וַתֵּתֵן אֶחָת וּמִפְתִּיִם בַּפְּרָעָה וּבְכָל־עֲבָדָיו וּבְכָל־עַם אֶרֶצוֹ

כִּי יָדַעַת כִּי הִזְדוּ עֲלֵיהֶם וַתַּעֲשֵׂלֵךְ שָׁם כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:  
<sup>11</sup> וְהֵיכָן בִּקְעָתָ לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲבְדוּ בַּחוּץ־הַיָּם בַּיּוֹשָׁה  
 וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם הִשְׁלַכְתָּ בַּמַּצּוֹלֹת כַּמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּמִיִּם עֲזִים:  
<sup>12</sup> וּבַעֲמֹד עֲנַן הִנָּחִיתָם יוֹמָם וּבַעֲמֹד אֵשׁ לַיְלָה לְהַאֲרִי  
 לָהֶם אֶת־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ־בָהּ:  
<sup>13</sup> וְעַל הַר־סִינִי יָרַדְתָּ וּדְבַר עֲמָהֶם מִשְׁמַיִם וַתִּתֵּן לָהֶם  
 מִשְׁפָּטִים יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתוֹרֹת אֱמֶת חֲקִים וּמִצְוֹת טוֹבִים:

<sup>1</sup>The entire people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the scroll of the Teaching of Moses with which the ETERNAL had charged Israel.

<sup>2</sup>On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the congregation, men and women and all who could listen with understanding.

<sup>3</sup>He read from it, facing the square before the Water Gate, from the first light until midday, to the men and the women and those who could understand; the ears of all the people were given to the scroll of the Teaching.

<sup>9:1</sup> On the twenty-fourth day of this month, the Israelites assembled, fasting, in sackcloth, and with earth upon them.

<sup>2</sup>Those of the stock of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

<sup>3</sup>Standing in their places, they read from the scroll of the Teaching of the ETERNAL their God for one-fourth of the day, and for another fourth they confessed and prostrated themselves before the ETERNAL their God.

<sup>4</sup> On the raised platform of the Levites stood Jeshua and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried in a loud voice to the ETERNAL their God.

<sup>5</sup> The Levites Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, and Pethahiah said, "Rise, bless the ETERNAL your God who is from eternity to eternity: 'May Your glorious name be blessed, exalted though it is above every blessing and praise!'

<sup>6</sup> "You alone are the ETERNAL. You made the heavens, the highest heavens, and all their host, the earth and everything upon it, the seas and everything in them. You keep them all alive, and the host of heaven prostrate themselves before You.

<sup>7</sup> You are the ETERNAL God, who chose Abram, who brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and changed his name to Abraham.

<sup>8</sup> Finding his heart true to You, You made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite -- to give it to his descendants. And You kept Your word, for You are righteous.

<sup>9</sup> You took note of our fathers' affliction in Egypt, and heard their cry at the Sea of Reeds.

<sup>10</sup> You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all the people of his land, for You knew that they acted presumptuously toward them. You made a name for Yourself that endures to this day.

<sup>11</sup> You split the sea before them; they passed through the sea on dry land, but You threw their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into the raging waters.

<sup>12</sup> "You led them by day with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way they were to go.

<sup>13</sup> You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke to them from heaven: You gave them right rules and true teachings, good laws and commandments.

Strangers  
Ruth Brin

You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him,  
for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

We were strangers in Egypt and Kiev,  
we were foreigners in Babylon and Berlin,

We were outsiders and wanderers  
in Spain and Poland and France.

We looked at the citizens of those lands  
with the dark pleading eyes of the alien.

Our hearts beat the hesitant beat  
of those without rights, fearful and uncertain.

We pray You help us to remember the heart of the stranger  
when we walk in freedom,

Help us to be fair and upright  
in all our dealings with other people.

Oh, burn and brand the lesson  
of all the years and all the lands  
on our hearts.

Lord, make us forever strangers  
to discrimination and injustice

## Alternative Haftarat for Terumah

Portrait of the Artist  
Moyshe Leib Halpern

Small freckles constellate my face;  
Among my black hairs, white ones run;  
I am not handsome; I am not  
An Adonis, lovely one.

Platyrrhine nose and devil's brow.  
My lips are lupine in intent;  
Howbeit those my eyes are blue,  
Are blue and most benevolent.

My feet are motionless before  
The dancers in their madrigal,  
To music both my big ears are  
Appreciative as a wall...

But with a heart that hammers out  
My song, I sing me as I please,  
While to its tempo the world hops,  
The world hops to my liturgies...

The eagle has his mighty wings,  
Behold I have my mighty arms!  
And life is struggle? I have blood  
That answers to its loud alarms...



## Alternative Haftarat for Tetzaveh

Nehemiah 12:27-47

<sup>2</sup> וּבַחֲנֻכַּת חוֹמַת יְרוּשָׁלַם בִּקְשׁוּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם מִכָּל־מְקוֹמֹתָם לְהֵבִיאָם לִירוּשָׁלַם לַעֲשׂת חֲנֻכָּה וְשִׁמְחָה וּבְתוֹדוֹת וּבְשִׁיר מְצֻלָּתִים וְנָבְלִים וּבְכִנּוֹרוֹת:  
<sup>28</sup> וַיֵּאָסְפוּ בְנֵי הַמְּשָׁרְרִים וּמִן־הַכֹּהֵן סְבִיבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם וּמִן־חֲצֵרֵי נֹטְפָתִי:  
<sup>29</sup> וּמִבֵּית הַגִּלְגָּל וּמִשְׁדּוֹת גִּבְעָה וְעִזְמוֹת כִּי חֲצִרִים בָּנוּ לָהֶם הַמְּשָׁרְרִים סְבִיבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם:  
<sup>30</sup> וַיִּטְהָרוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וַיִּטְהָרוּ אֶת־הָעָם וְאֶת־הַשְּׁעָרִים וְאֶת־הַחוֹמָה:  
<sup>31</sup> וַאֲעֵלָה אֶת־שְׂרָיִי יְהוּדָה מֵעַל לַחוֹמָה וְאַעֲמִידָה שְׁתֵּי תוֹדֹת גְּדוֹלֹת וְתַהֲלֹכַת לַיָּמִין מֵעַל לַחוֹמָה לְשַׁעַר הָאֲשָׁפָת:  
<sup>32</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרֵיהֶם הוֹשַׁעְיָה וְחֲצִי שְׂרָיִי יְהוּדָה:  
<sup>33</sup> וְעִזְרִיָּה עֶזְרָא וּמִשְׁלֵם:  
<sup>34</sup> יְהוּדָה וּבְנִימָן וְשִׁמְעִיָּה וִירְמְיָה:  
<sup>35</sup> וּמִבְנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת זְכַרְיָה בֶּרֶךְיֹונָתָן בֶּרֶךְ־שִׁמְעִיָּה בֶּרֶךְ־מַתְנִיָּה בֶּרֶךְ־מִיכָיָה בֶּרֶךְ־זְכוּר בֶּרֶךְ־אֶסָר:  
<sup>36</sup> וְאַחֲרָיו שִׁמְעִיָּה וְעִזְרָאֵל מְלָלִי גְלָלִי מַעֲי נַחֲנָאֵל וִיהוּדָה חֲנָנִי בְּכָל־שִׁיר דָּוִד אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וְעֶזְרָא הַסּוֹפֵר לִפְנֵיהֶם:  
<sup>37</sup> וְעַל שַׁעַר הָעֵץ וְגִגְדָם עָלוּ עַל־מַעְלוֹת עִיר דָּוִד בַּמַּעְלָה לַחוֹמָה מֵעַל לְבֵית דָּוִד וְעַד שַׁעַר הַמִּים מִזְרָח:  
<sup>38</sup> וְהַתּוֹדָה הַשְּׁנִית הַהוֹלֶכֶת לְמוֹאֵל וְאַנִּי אַחֲרֶיהָ וְחֲצִי הָעָם מֵעַל לַהֲחוֹמָה מֵעַל לְמַגְדֵּל הַתְּנוּרִים וְעַד הַחוֹמָה הַרְחֵבָה:  
<sup>39</sup> וּמֵעַל לְשַׁעַר־אֶפְרַיִם וְעַל־שַׁעַר הַיְּשָׁנָה וְעַל־שַׁעַר הַדְּגָיִם וּמַגְדֵּל חֲנָנָאֵל וּמַגְדֵּל־הַמָּאָה וְעַד שַׁעַר הַצֹּאן וְעַמְדוֹ בְּשַׁעַר הַמִּטְרָה:  
<sup>40</sup> וְתַעֲמִידָנָה שְׁתֵּי הַתּוֹדֹת בְּבֵית הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַנִּי וְחֲצִי הַסֹּגְגִים עִמִּי:  
<sup>41</sup> וְהַכֹּהֲנִים אֱלִיָּקִים מַעֲשִׂיָּה מְנַיִן מִיכָיָה אֱלִיָּעִינִי זְכַרְיָה חֲנַנְיָה בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת:  
<sup>42</sup> וּמַעֲשִׂיָּה וְשִׁמְעִיָּה וְאַלְעָזָר וְעִזִּי וִיהוֹחָנָן וּמִלְכִּיָּה וְעִילָם וְעֶזְרָא וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ הַמְּשָׁרְרִים וְיִזְכְּרֻהָ הַפְּקִיד:

<sup>43</sup> וַיִּזְבְּחוּ בַיּוֹם הַהוּא זָבָחִים גְּדוּלִים וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים  
שָׂמְחָם שִׂמְחָה גְדוּלָּה וְגַם הַנָּשִׁים וְהַיְלָדִים שָׂמְחוּ וַתִּשְׂמַע  
שִׂמְחַת יְרוּשָׁלַם מִרְחוֹק:

<sup>44</sup> וַיִּפְקְדוּ בַיּוֹם הַהוּא אַנְשֵׁים עַל־הַנִּשְׁכּוֹת לְאוֹצְרוֹת  
לְתַרומֹת לְרֹאשִׁית וּלְמַעֲשָׂרוֹת לְכֹנֹס בָּהֶם לְשָׂדֵי הָעָרִים  
מִנְאוֹת הַתּוֹרָה לַכֹּהֲנִים וּלְלוֹוִים כִּי שִׂמְחַת יְהוּדָה  
עַל־הַכֹּהֲנִים וְעַל־הַלוֹוִים הַעֲמָדִים:

<sup>45</sup> וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ מִשְׁמֶרֶת אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וּמִשְׁמֶרֶת הַטְּהָרָה וְהַמְּשָׁרָרִים  
וְהַשְּׁעָרִים כַּמִּצְוָה הַזֶּה שְׁלֵמָה בָּנוּ:

<sup>46</sup> כִּי־בִימֵי הַיּוֹד וְאַסָּף מַקְדָּם (רֹאשׁ) [רֹאשִׁי] הַמְּשָׁרָרִים  
וְשִׁיר־תְּהִלָּה וְהַדָּוָה לְאֱלֹהִים:

<sup>47</sup> וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּימֵי זָרְבָבֶל וּבִימֵי נְחֻמְיָה נְתָנִים מְנוּחַ  
הַמְּשָׁרָרִים וְהַשְּׁעָרִים דְּבָרֵינוּם בְּיוֹמוֹ וּמִקְדָּשִׁים לְלוֹוִים  
וְהַלוֹוִים מִקְדָּשִׁים לְבְנֵי אֲהֵרֹן:

<sup>27</sup> At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites, wherever they lived, were sought out and brought to Jerusalem to celebrate a joyful dedication with thanksgiving and with song, accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres.

<sup>28</sup> The companies of singers assembled from the *Jordan* plain, the environs of Jerusalem, and from the Netophathite villages;

<sup>29</sup> from Beth-hagilgal, from the countryside of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers built themselves villages in the environs of Jerusalem.

<sup>30</sup> The priests and Levites purified themselves; then they purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.

<sup>31</sup> I had the officers of Judah go up onto the wall, and I appointed two large thanksgiving *choirs* and processions. *One marched* south on the wall, to the Dung Gate;

<sup>32</sup> behind them were Hoshaiah and half the officers of Judah,

<sup>33</sup> and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,

<sup>34</sup> Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,

<sup>35</sup> and some of the young priests, with trumpets; Zechariah son of Jonathan son of Shemaiah son of Mattaniah son of Micaiah son of Zaccur son of Asaph,

<sup>36</sup> and his brothers Shemaiah, and Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David, the man of God; and Ezra the scribe went ahead of them.

<sup>37</sup> From there to the Fountain Gate, where they ascended the steps of the City of David directly before them, by the ascent on the wall, above the house of David, *and onward* to the Water Gate on the east.

<sup>38</sup> The other thanksgiving *choir* marched on the wall in the opposite direction, with me and half the people behind it, above the Tower of Ovens to the Broad Wall;

<sup>39</sup> and above the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they halted at the Gate of the Prison Compound.

<sup>40</sup> Both thanksgiving choirs halted at the House of God, and I and half the prefects with me,

<sup>41</sup> and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, Hananiah, with trumpets,

<sup>42</sup> and Maaseiah and Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. Then the singers sounded forth, with Jezrahiah in charge.

<sup>43</sup> On that day, they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced, for God made them rejoice greatly; the women and children also rejoiced, and the rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard from afar.

<sup>44</sup> At that time men were appointed over the chambers that served as treasuries for the gifts, the first fruits, and the tithes, into which the portions prescribed by the Teaching for the priests and Levites were gathered from the fields of the towns; for the people of Judah were grateful to the priests and Levites who were in attendance,

<sup>45</sup> who kept the charge of their God and the charge of purity, as well as to the singers and gatekeepers *serving* in accord with the ordinance of David and Solomon his son --

<sup>46</sup> for the chiefs of the singers and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God already existed in the time of David and Asaph.

<sup>47</sup> And in the time of Zerubbabel, and in the time of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions of the singers and the gatekeepers, and made sacred contributions for the Levites, and the Levites made sacred contributions for the Aaronites.

## Isaiah 61:1-4: 6-11

רוח אדני יהוה עלי לען משח יהוה אתי לבשר עניים  
שלחני לחפש לנשפרי-לב לקרא לשבויים דרור ולאסורים  
פקח-קוֹחַ:

<sup>2</sup> לקרא שנת-רצון ליהוה ויום נקם לאלהינו לנחם  
כל-אבלים:

<sup>3</sup> לשום לאבלי ציון לתת להם פאר תחת אפר שמן ששון  
תחת אבל מעטה תהלה תחת רוח כהה וקרא להם אילי  
הצדק משע יהוה להתפאר:

<sup>4</sup> ובנו חרבות עולם שממות ראשנים יקוממו וחדשו ערי  
חרב שממות דור ודור:

<sup>6</sup> ואתם כהני יהוה תקראו משרתי אלהינו יאמר לכם חיל  
גוים תאכלו ובכבודם תתנומרו:

<sup>7</sup> תחת בשתכם משנה וכלמה ירנו חלקם לכן בארצם  
משנה יירשו שמחת עולם תהיה להם:

<sup>8</sup> כי אני יהוה אהב משפט שני גל בעולה ונחתי פעלתם  
באמת וברית עולם אכרות להם:

<sup>9</sup> ונודע בגוים זרעם וצאצאיהם בתוך העמים כל-ראיהם  
יכירו כי הם זרע ברך יהוה: ס

<sup>10</sup> שוש אשיר ביהוה תגל נפשי באלהי כי הלבישני  
בגדי-ישע מעיל צדקה יעטני כחתן וכהן פאר וכפלה  
תעדה כל-יה:

<sup>11</sup> כי כארץ תוציא צמחה וכננה זרועיה תצמיח כן אדני  
יהוה יצמיח צדקה ותהלה נגד כל-הגוים:

<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Eternal GOD is upon me, Because the ETERNAL has anointed me; He has sent me as a herald of joy to the humble, To bind up the wounded of heart, To proclaim release to the captives, Liberation to the imprisoned;

<sup>2</sup> To proclaim a year of the ETERNAL's favor And a day of vindication by our God; To comfort all who mourn --

<sup>3</sup> To provide for the mourners in Zion -- To give them a turban instead of ashes, The festive ointment instead of mourning, A garment of splendor instead of a drooping spirit. They shall be called terebinths of victory, Planted by the ETERNAL for His glory.

<sup>4</sup> And they shall build the ancient ruins, Raise up the desolations of old, And renew the ruined cities, The desolations of many ages.

<sup>6</sup> While you shall be called "Priests of the ETERNAL," And termed "Servants of our God." You shall enjoy the wealth of nations And revel in their riches.

<sup>7</sup> Because your shame was double -- Men cried, "Disgrace is their portion" -- Assuredly, They shall have a double share in their land, Joy shall be theirs for all time.

<sup>8</sup> For I the ETERNAL love justice, I hate robbery with a burnt offering. I will pay them their wages faithfully, And make a covenant with them for all time.

<sup>9</sup> Their offspring shall be known among the nations, Their descendants in the midst of the peoples. All who see them shall recognize That they are a stock the ETERNAL has blessed.

<sup>10</sup> I greatly rejoice in the ETERNAL, My whole being exults in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of triumph, Wrapped me in a robe of victory, Like a bridegroom adorned with a turban, Like a bride bedecked with her finery.

<sup>11</sup> For as the earth brings forth her growth And a garden makes the seed shoot up, So the Eternal GOD will make Victory and renown shoot up In the presence of all the nations.

## Alternative Haftarah for Vayakhel

I Kings 7:13-26

<sup>13</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה וַיִּקַּח אֶת־חִירָם מִצֹּרִי: כִּי־אִשָּׁה־  
 אֲלֹמֶנֶה הָיָה מִמִּפְתֹּה נִפְתָּלִי וְאָבִיו אִיש־צֹרִי חָרָשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת.  
 וַיִּפְלֹא אֶת־הַחֲכָמָה וְאֶת־הַתְּבוּנָה וְאֶת־הַדַּעַת לַעֲשׂוֹת  
 כָּל־מְלָאכָה בְּנֹחֶשֶׁת וַיִּבְנוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה וַיַּעַשׂ  
 אֶת־כָּל־מְלָאכָתּוֹ:

<sup>15</sup> וַיֵּצֵר אֶת־שְׁנֵי הָעַמֻּדִים נְחֹשֶׁת שְׁמֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה אַמָּה קוֹמָתָם  
 הָעַמֻּד הָאֶחָד וְחֹוֹשׁ שְׁתֵּים־עֶשְׂרֵה אַמָּה וְסָב אֶת־הָעַמֻּד  
 הַשֵּׁנִי:

<sup>16</sup> וַיִּשְׁתִּי כַתְרָת עֵשָׂה לָתֵת עַל־רֹאשִׁי הָעַמֻּדִים מִצֶּדֶק נְחֹשֶׁת  
 הָקִמַּשׁ אַמָּוֹת קוֹמָת הַכְתָּרֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהָקִמַּשׁ אַמָּוֹת קוֹמָת

הַכְתָּרֹת הַשֵּׁנִית:  
<sup>17</sup> שְׁבָכִים מַעֲשֶׂה שְׁבָכָה וְדָלִים מַעֲשֶׂה שִׁרְטוֹת לַכְתָּרֹת  
 אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשׁ הָעַמֻּדִים שְׁבָעָה לַכְתָּרֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְשְׁבָעָה  
 לַכְתָּרֹת הַשֵּׁנִית:

<sup>18</sup> וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הָעַמֻּדִים וְשְׁנֵי שֹׁרִים סָבִיב עַל־הַשְּׁבָכָה הָאֵלֶּה  
 לַכְתָּוֹת אֶת־הַכְתָּרֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשׁ הָרִמּוֹנִים וְכֵן עֵשָׂה

לַכְתָּרֹת הַשֵּׁנִית:  
<sup>19</sup> וְכַתְרָת אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשׁ הָעַמֻּדִים מַעֲשֶׂה שִׁרְטֹן כְּאוֹלָם  
 אֲרָבַע אַמָּוֹת:

<sup>20</sup> וְכַתְרָת עַל־שְׁנֵי הָעַמֻּדִים גִּם־מִפְתֵּל מִלְעֲפֹת הַפֶּתִל אֲשֶׁר  
 לַעֲבֹר (שְׁבָכָה) וְהַשְּׁבָכָה וְהַרְמוֹנִים מְאֻתִּים טָרִים סָבִיב עַל

הַכְתָּרֹת הַשֵּׁנִית:  
<sup>21</sup> וַיִּקְּם אֶת־הָעַמֻּדִים לְאֵלֶם הַדִּיכָל וַיִּקְּם אֶת־הָעַמֻּד הַיָּמִי  
 וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יָכִין וַיִּקְּם אֶת־הָעַמֻּד הַשְּׂמָאלִי וַיִּקְרָא

אֶת־שְׁמוֹ בַעֲזִי:  
<sup>22</sup> וַעַל רֹאשׁ הָעַמֻּדִים מַעֲשֶׂה שִׁרְטֹן וְהִתָּם מִלְאֲכָת הָעַמֻּדִים:  
<sup>23</sup> וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הֵיָם מִוָּצֵק עֵשָׂר בְּאַמָּה מִשְׁפָּחוֹ עַד־שִׁפְחוֹ עֵגֶל

סָבִיב וְהָקִמַּשׁ בְּאַמָּה קוֹמָתוֹ (וְקוֹמָה) וְנָקְוָן שְׁלֹשִׁים בְּאַמָּה וְסָב  
 אֹתוֹ סָבִיב:

<sup>24</sup> וּפְקָעִים מִתְּהֵת לְשִׁפְחוֹ סָבִיב סָבִיבִים אֹתוֹ עֵשָׂר בְּאַמָּה  
 מִפְקָעִים אֶת־הֵיָם סָבִיב שְׁנֵי טוֹרִים הַפְּקָעִים וַיִּזְקִים בִּיזְקָתוֹ:

<sup>25</sup> עַמֻּד עַל־שְׁנֵי עֵשָׂר בָּקָר שְׁלֹשֶׁה פָּנִים וְצִפּוֹנָה וּשְׁלִשָּׁה

פָּנִים וְיָמָה וּשְׁלִשָּׁה פָּנִים נִגְבָּה וּשְׁלִשָּׁה פָּנִים מְזֻרְחָה וְהָיָה  
עֲלֵיהֶם מִלְמַעְלָה וְכָל־אֲחֵרֵיהֶם בֵּיתָה:  
וַעֲבָדוּ טָפַח וּשְׁפָתוֹ כַּמַּעֲשֶׂה שְׁפָת־כּוֹס פָּרַח שׁוֹשַׁן אֲלָפִים  
בֵּית יָקִיל:

<sup>13</sup> King Solomon sent for Hiram and brought him down from Tyre.

<sup>14</sup> He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father had been a Tyrian, a coppersmith. He was endowed with skill, ability, and talent for executing all work in bronze. He came to King Solomon and executed all his work.

<sup>15</sup> He cast two columns of bronze; one column was 18 cubits high and measured 12 cubits in circumference, *and similarly* the other column.

<sup>16</sup> He made two capitals, cast in bronze, to be set upon the two columns, the height of each of the two capitals being 5 cubits;

<sup>17</sup> also nets of meshwork with festoons of chainwork for the capitals that were on the top of the columns, seven for each of the two capitals.

<sup>18</sup> He made the columns so that there were two rows *of pomegranates* encircling the top of the one network, to cover the capitals that were on the top of the pomegranates; and he did the same for *the network* on the second capital.

<sup>19</sup> The capitals upon the columns of the portico were of lily design, 4 cubits high;

<sup>20</sup> so also the capitals upon the two columns extended above and next to the bulge that was beside the network. There were 200 pomegranates in rows around the top of the second capital.

<sup>21</sup> He set up the columns at the portico of the Great Hall; he set up one column on the right and named it Jachin, and he set up the other column on the left and named it Boaz.



<sup>22</sup> Upon the top of the columns there was a lily design. Thus the work of the columns was completed.

<sup>23</sup> Then he made the tank of cast metal, 10 cubits across from brim to brim, completely round; it was 5 cubits high, and it measured 30 cubits in circumference.

<sup>24</sup> There were gourds below the brim completely encircling it -- ten to a cubit, encircling the tank; the gourds were in two rows, cast in one piece with it.

<sup>25</sup> It stood upon twelve oxen: three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east, with the tank resting upon them; their haunches were all turned inward.

<sup>26</sup> It was a handbreadth thick, and its brim was made like that of a cup, like the petals of a lily. Its capacity was 2000 baths.

Portrait of the Artist  
Moyshe Leib Halpern

Small freckles constellate my face;  
Among my black hairs, white ones run;  
I am not handsome; I am not  
An Adonis, lovely one.

Platyrhine nose and devil's brow.  
My lips are lupine in intent;  
Howbeit those my eyes are blue,  
Are blue and most benevolent.

My feet are motionless before  
The dancers in their madrigal,  
To music both my big ears are  
Appreciative as a wall...

But with a heart that hammers out  
My song, I sing me as I please,  
While to its tempo the world hops,  
The world hops to my liturgies...

The eagle has his mighty wings,  
Behold I have my mighty arms!  
And life is struggle? I have blood  
That answers to its loud alarms...

## Alternative Haftarat for Pikudei

1 Kings 7:51 - 8:21

<sup>1</sup> וַתֵּשֶׁלֶם כָּל-הַמְּלָאכָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה בֵּית יְהוָה  
וַיָּבֵא שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת-קִדְשֵׁי דָוִד אָבִיו אֶת-הַכֶּסֶף וְאֶת-הַזָּהָב  
וְאֶת-הַכֵּלִים נָתַן בְּאֲצֻרֹת בֵּית יְהוָה:

<sup>2</sup> אִזּוּ יִקְהֵל שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת-זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-כָּל-רָאשֵׁי  
הַמִּטּוֹת נְשֵׂי הָאֲבוֹת לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה  
יְרוּשָׁלַם לְהַעֲלוֹת אֶת-אֲרוֹן בְּרִית-יְהוָה מֵעִיר דָּוִד הִיא צִיּוֹן:  
<sup>3</sup> וַיִּקְהֲלוּ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה כָּל-אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּינֵהם הָאֲתָנִים  
בַּחֹג הוּא הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי:

<sup>4</sup> וַיָּבֵאוּ כָּל זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂאוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת-הָאֲרוֹן:  
<sup>5</sup> וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת-אֲרוֹן יְהוָה וְאֶת-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת-כָּל-כְּלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ  
אֲשֶׁר בָּאֹהֶל וַיַּעֲלוּ אִתָּם הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם:

<sup>6</sup> וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה וְכָל-עֵדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנוֹעֲדִים עָלָיו אִתּוֹ לִפְנֵי  
הָאֲרוֹן מִזִּבְחִים צֹאן וּבָקָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִסְפְּרוּ וְלֹא יִמְנוּ מְרֹב:  
<sup>7</sup> וַיָּבֵאוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת-אֲרוֹן בְּרִית-יְהוָה אֶל-מְקוֹמוֹ אֶל-דְּבִיר  
הַבַּיִת אֶל-קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדְשִׁים אֶל-תַּחַת כְּנָפֵי הַכְּרוּבִים:

<sup>8</sup> כִּי הַכְּרוּבִים פָּרְשִׁים כְּנָפִים אֶל-מְקוֹם הָאֲרוֹן וַיִּסְכּוּ  
הַכְּרוּבִים עַל-הָאֲרוֹן וְעַל-בְּדָיו מִלְמַעְלָה:

<sup>9</sup> וַיֹּאדְכוּ הַכְּרוּבִים וַיִּירָאוּ רָאשֵׁי הַכְּרוּבִים מִן-הַקֹּדֶשׁ עַל-פְּנֵי  
הַדְּבִיר וְלֹא יָרְאוּ תְּחוּצָה וַיִּהְיוּ שֵׁם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

<sup>10</sup> אֵין בְּאֲרוֹן לֶקַח שְׁנֵי לַחֹת הָאֲבָנִים אֲשֶׁר הִנֵּחַ שֵׁם מֹשֶׁה  
בַּחֲרֹב אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת יְהוָה עִם-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּצֵאתָם מֵאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרָיִם:

<sup>11</sup> וַיְהִי בְצֵאת הַכֹּהֲנִים מִן-הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהָעָן מָלֵא אֶת-בַּיִת יְהוָה:

<sup>12</sup> וְלֹא-יָכְלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים לַעֲמֹד לְשֵׁרֵת מִפְּנֵי הָעָן כִּי-מָלֵא  
כְּבוֹד-יְהוָה אֶת-בַּיִת יְהוָה: פ

<sup>13</sup> אִזּוּ אָמַר שְׁלֹמֹה יְהוָה אָמַר לִשְׁכֵן בְּעֶרְפֶּל:

<sup>14</sup> בָּנָה בְּנִיחֵי בֵּית זָבַל לֶךְ מְכוֹן לִשְׁכֵתָּה עוֹלָמִים:

<sup>15</sup> וַיִּסֵּב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-פָּנָיו וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶת כָּל-קְהֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְכָל-קְהֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל עָמַד:

<sup>16</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּפִיו אֶת  
דָּוִד אָבִי וַיְבָרֵךְ מֵלֵא לֵאמֹר:

<sup>16</sup> מִהַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־עַמִּי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם  
לֹא־בָחַרְתִּי בְּעִיר מִכָּל שְׁבִטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבָנוֹת בַּיִת לַיהוָה  
שְׁמִי שָׁם וְאֶבְחַר בְּדָוִד לַיהוָה עַל־עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
<sup>17</sup> וַיְהִי עַסְלִבְבָּ דָּוִד אָבִי לְבָנוֹת בַּיִת לַשֵּׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

<sup>18</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי דָוִד אָבִי זֶעַן אֲשֶׁר הָיָה עַסְלִבְבָּ לְבָנוֹת  
בַּיִת לַשֵּׁם הַטִּיבָתָ כִּי הָיָה עַסְלִבְבָּ:

<sup>19</sup> כִּן אַתָּה לֹא תִבְנֶה הַבַּיִת כִּי אֶסְבְּגָה הִיצֵא מִחֻלְצִיךָ  
הוֹאִיבֶנָה הַבַּיִת לַשֵּׁם:

<sup>20</sup> וַיָּקָם יְהוָה אֶת־דְּבָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וְאָלָם תַּחַת דָּוִד אָבִי  
וְאָשֵׁב עַל־כֶּסֶּא יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה וְאֶבְנֶה הַבַּיִת לַשֵּׁם  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

<sup>21</sup> וְאֲשֶׁם שֵׁם מְקוֹם לְאֹרֹן אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם בְּרִית יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת  
עִם־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּהוֹצִיאוֹ אֶתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

<sup>51</sup> When all the work that King Solomon had done in the House of the ETERNAL was completed, Solomon brought in the sacred donations of his father David -- the silver, the gold, and the vessels -- and deposited them in the treasury of the House of the ETERNAL.

<sup>8:1</sup> Then Solomon convoked the elders of Israel -- all the heads of the tribes and the ancestral chieftains of the Israelites -- before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the ETERNAL from the City of David, that is, Zion.

<sup>2</sup> All the men of Israel gathered before King Solomon at the Feast, in the month of Ethanim -- that is, the seventh month.

<sup>3</sup> When all the elders of Israel had come, the priests lifted the Ark

<sup>4</sup> and carried up the Ark of the ETERNAL. Then the priests and the Levites brought the Tent of Meeting and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent.

<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, King Solomon and the whole community of Israel, who were assembled with him before the Ark, were sacrificing sheep and oxen in such abundance that they could not be numbered or counted.

<sup>6</sup> The priests brought the Ark of the ETERNAL's Covenant to its place underneath the wings of the cherubim, in the Shrine of the House, in the Holy of Holies;

<sup>7</sup> for the cherubim had their wings spread out over the place of the Ark, so that the cherubim shielded the Ark and its poles from above.

<sup>8</sup> The poles projected so that the ends of the poles were visible in the sanctuary in front of the Shrine, but they could not be seen outside; and there they remain to this day.

<sup>9</sup> There was nothing inside the Ark but the two tablets of stone which Moses placed there at Horeb, when the ETERNAL made *a covenant* with the Israelites after their departure from the land of Egypt.

<sup>10</sup> When the priests came out of the sanctuary -- for the cloud had filled the House of the ETERNAL

<sup>11</sup> and the priests were not able to remain and perform the service because of the cloud, for the Presence of the ETERNAL filled the House of the ETERNAL --

<sup>12</sup> then Solomon declared: "The ETERNAL has chosen To abide in a thick cloud:

<sup>13</sup> I have now built for You A stately House, A place where You May dwell forever." <sup>14</sup>

Then, with the whole congregation of Israel standing, the king faced about and blessed the whole congregation of Israel.

<sup>15</sup> He said: "Praised be the ETERNAL, the God of Israel, who has fulfilled with deeds the promise He made to my father David. For He said,

<sup>16</sup> 'Ever since I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city among all the tribes of Israel for building a House where My name might abide; but I have chosen David to rule My people Israel.'

<sup>17</sup> "Now my father David had intended to build a House for the name of the ETERNAL, the God of Israel.

<sup>18</sup> But the ETERNAL said to my father David, 'As regards your intention to build a House for My name, you did right to have that intention.

<sup>19</sup> However, you shall not build the House yourself; instead, your son, the issue of your loins, shall build the House for My name.'

<sup>20</sup> "And the ETERNAL has fulfilled the promise that He made: I have succeeded my father David and have ascended the throne of Israel, as the ETERNAL promised. I have built the House for the name of the ETERNAL, the God of Israel;

<sup>21</sup> and I have set a place there for the Ark, containing the covenant which the ETERNAL made with our fathers when He brought them out from the land of Egypt."