

Haftarat Vayakhel and Pekudei

Torah: Exodus 35:1–40:38

Haftarah: 1 Kings 7:40–8:21

The Glory of God

General Overview

In some years the Torah portion is a double portion, combining *Parashiyot Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*. However, in some years these *sidrot* are separated. Nonetheless, the contents are, in reality, one continuous story.

In like manner when the *parashiyot* are separated, the haftarot are also. The two haftarot readings are consecutive verses from 1 Kings 7:40–50 and 1 Kings 7:51–8:21. It is one story.

This passage in 1 Kings recounts the grand finale of the dream that began with King David. This great and righteous king of Israel wanted to build a house for the Lord his God. God, however, told him that he was not the one to do it. Rather, his son Solomon would take up and finish the task. In our passage we read about the final stages of the work and the ceremony that Solomon performed to bring up the ark in order to dedicate the completed Temple.

Connection to the Parasha

The 1 Kings chapters 7 and 8 are undoubtedly chosen as the haftarah to Parashot Vayakhel and Pekudei because the subject of those sections from Exodus is the assembly and completion of the Mishkan. Likewise, this passage records the final assembly and completion of the First Temple. The climax in both cases is the entrance into the sanctuaries of the glory (the Shekinah) of God.

Exposition

There are three main actors in this glorious drama. The first mentioned in the text is King Hiram of Tyre, close friend of the royal Judean family and assistant to Solomon in the Temple's construction.

Next, from a human standpoint, the central figure is King Solomon of the United Kingdom of Israel. He is the one with the vision and mandate from the Lord to build the Temple. Accordingly, he is the one directing the affairs.

Last, this passage records the most important figure of them all — the King of kings Himself, the Lord God of Israel. After all, the Temple is His primary place of residence on earth. The highlight of this passage, therefore, is when He takes up His residence among the people of Israel.

Accordingly, our study outline reflects these three sets of participants in the finalizing of the First Temple:

I. King Hiram

II. King Solomon

III. King of Kings

In this excerpt of the haftarah commentary, we will direct our attention to the third section.

III. The King of Kings

We have looked in this haftarah at two human kings, King Hiram of Tyre and King Solomon of Jerusalem. In them, we saw the kind of men God chose to work together to build His Temple. It was a beautiful portrait of how Jew and non-Jew were intended to be united in their service of the Lord together, following after His Torah.

But, by far, the highlight of this haftarah is the royal King of kings Himself, the Lord God of Israel. He was, indeed, behind every pomegranate crafted, every cedar cut, every tile fashioned, and every curtain woven.

The climax of God's involvement is recorded in 1 Kings 8:10ff. The text says,

And it came about when the priests came from the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

There are some parallels between the glory of God filling the Mishkan and the glory of the Lord filling the Temple. First, notice the extreme brevity of both accounts. One would imagine that with such a major supernatural event, there would be paragraphs explaining the complete phenomena. Not so. It is not that there would be lack of things to explain, but that human words just could not do it justice!

Another comparison in our brief study on the glory of God is between what happened to the kohanim in Solomon's Temple and what happened to Moshe in the Mishkan. 1 Kings 8:11 tells us that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud's presence. It was the same with Moshe, according to Exodus 40:35. Moshe could not even enter the tent because of the cloud's presence. There are places that are not appropriate for a mortal to be present, and this was apparently one of those places.

However, according to Hebrews 4:16, on the spiritual level, we have ready and immediate access to God's throne of grace. Oh, for the day when we will be relieved of our bodies of flesh to be able to see with our physical eyes this glorious throne room!

Third, in both cases, the cloud did not come until the respective buildings were completed. We are not sure of the significance of this other than to suggest the following: (Remember that this is only a suggestion. Perhaps you, the student, will find more appropriate applications for this point.) God is a God of peace. In His presence is calmness, serenity, and stability. His dwelling with mankind must reflect His nature. Although He was most certainly present in the construction, He

was not completely “at home” until His house was finished. To be “at home” means to rest in security and peace without commotion.

This is the way it is with God. He is always present with His people no matter what we do. But He may not always feels “at home.” Our lives were not meant to be ones marked by confusion, agitation, restlessness, irritability, etc. When Messiah enters the temple of our hearts, His presence brings His kind of peace and security. It is our flesh that wants to rob us of that calm sense of God being “at home” in our temples, just as He was at home in the Mishkan and in the First Temple.

Thus, we have the recording of one of the greatest historical events of all time. In this double haftarah portion, furthermore, we also have the record of how God stepped into human lives and took up residence in a special and unique physical manifestation among His people. If only it would have lasted! Ezekiel, in chapters 10–11, vividly reminds us of the tragic account of the glory’s departure from earth.

Although there is no evidence that the glory cloud filled the Second Temple, nonetheless, the glory of God was there, but in a different way — in the person of Yeshua the Messiah. For, “in Him all of the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form” (Colossians 3:9). “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

After seeing the Shekinah’s arrival, is it any wonder that Solomon burst forth into prayer and blessing? That is exactly what it will be like when we will see the glory cloud upon Messiah’s second coming! As far as this haftarah is concerned, the glory made by the two earthly kings (the Temple building itself) was far overshadowed by the arrival of the glorious King of kings Himself. Instead of people bowing before him, praising the work of their hands, King Solomon led the people to bow before the Holy One as is fitting for the work of His Holy hands.