

Haftarat Terumah

Torah: Exodus 25:1–27:19

Haftarah: I Kings 5:12–6:13

Solomon's Building of the Temple

General Overview

The great King David had passed away and his son Solomon was now the third king of a united Israel. While he was still living, David expressed a desire, in 2 Samuel chapter 7, to build a house for the Lord God of Israel. However, because he was still preoccupied with strengthening the monarchy through his military responsibilities, the Lord told him that he was not to build the Temple. Instead, Solomon would engage himself in this project.

This haftarah is the story of the fulfilment of that promise. It is the story of how Solomon set about to build the magnificent house of God in Jerusalem. It does not contain the complete account of the entire construction project, but it covers the general outline for the beginning of the construction as well as the general plan for the main sanctuary.

Connection to the Parasha

The Parashat Terumah is the account of the revelation from God to Moshe concerning the building of the Mishkan (the Tabernacle). Since its completion, the Mishkan had been on the move. Wherever Israel encamped, there the Mishkan was erected. When Israel entered the Land of Canaan and settled there, the Mishkan was placed in various temporary locations. The final location for the Ark of the Covenant before it was placed in the completed Temple that Solomon was building was just south of the present Temple Mount in the part of the city of David called Zion (1 Kings 8:1). However, apparently, the rest of the Mishkan was located at the high place of Gibeon (1 Kings 3), northwest of Jerusalem.

This haftarah is the story of the beginning of the construction of the permanent "Mishkan," the House of the Lord. With the completion of this Temple, the Ark now had a fixed home until it was removed in the destruction of the Temple about 380 years later in 586 BCE. According to scholar Gleason Archer,

The theme of these two books was to demonstrate on the basis of Israel's history that the welfare of the nation ultimately depended upon the sincerity of its faithfulness to the covenant with Jehovah, and that the success of any ruler was to be measured by the degree of his adherence to the Mosaic constitution and his maintenance of a pure and God-honouring testimony before the heathen.¹

In essence, this is exactly what the Lord reminds Solomon at the end of our haftarah, in 1 Kings 6:11–13. We will expand upon these verses in our commentary.

Exposition

This passage is a straightforward historical narrative. It is not written in poetry. Accordingly, there are not the usual parallelisms or vivid word pictures so characteristic of Hebrew poetry. The main character, of course, is Solomon. Here we see his mind operate as he joyfully embarks on his greatest of building projects, the one which was dearest to his heart — the house for God that his father David so longingly desired to build.

There is one technical matter we need to keep in mind before we start. There is a difference in the verse enumeration between the Hebrew Bible and some of the translations — 1 Kings chapter 5 in the standard Hebrew Bible begins at 4:21 in many translations. It is beyond the scope of this commentary to discuss the reasons for this problem. Consequently, in the Hebrew the haftarah begins at 1 Kings 5:26 and in the some translations, the haftarah starts at 1 Kings 5:12. We will comment according to the majority of the English translations since most of our readers do not know Hebrew. Here is our outline:

- I. The Commission
- II. The Covenant
- III. The Construction
- IV. The Condition

In this excerpt of the haftarah, we will look at the second part, The Covenant.

II. The Covenant

This haftarah not only records the wonderful commission from God to build His House, it also tells us of the covenant that Solomon made in order to help facilitate this project. In 1 Kings 5:12 we read,

And the Lord gave wisdom to Solomon just as He spoke to him and there was peace between Solomon and Hiram and they cut a covenant between them.

A. Tyre and Hiram

Tyre was a city on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel, in present-day Lebanon. The Sidonian Phoenicians rebuilt it in the 12th century BCE. The Phoenicians were coastal Canaanites. Tyre became the capital of the Phoenicians, who at their height of power occupied the area on the coast from Acco, north into modern day Lebanon. Under the leadership of one of its most able rulers, King Hiram I, Tyre

enjoyed considerable expansion and prosperity; and before the end of the 10th century BC colonies existed in Cyprus, Sicily, and Sardinia, where copper mines were exploited.ⁱⁱ

Hiram himself enjoyed a warm relationship with King David. In fact, Hiram even acknowledged the God of Israel as the only true God, according to 2 Chronicles 2:11 ff. This is an important fact to remember when we discuss why Solomon made a covenant with him.

Like any wise king, Hiram sought the welfare of his people, as well as security from outside of his borders. Therefore, it must have been a matter of great importance to the king of Tyre to remain on good terms with Israel,

because the land of Israel was a granary for the Phoenicians, and friendship with such a neighbour would necessarily tend greatly to promote the interests of the Phoenician commerce.ⁱⁱⁱ

Thus, wisely, Hiram continued his friendly relationship with David's son Solomon. In turn, just as was desired, Solomon supplied him with much needed grain and oil from the Galilee. Hiram, then, was able to supply Solomon with timber and stone with the skilled workers to use them.

However, after twenty years of close relationship, Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the Galilee. These were not great cities and Hiram really did not appreciate the gift, thinking that it was not very valuable. This action by Solomon has been interpreted as a measure of desperation on the part of Solomon. "By this time Solomon's financial position must have been embarrassingly acute and the royal coffers severely overstrained."^{iv} Yet, there does not appear to be any animosity in the relationship of these two rulers.

B. The Agreement

Our text indicates that Solomon "cut a covenant" with Hiram (from I Kings 5:12 in the English Bible). Undoubtedly, some may consider this covenant to have been a compromise on Solomon's part. They say that Solomon should not have entered into a covenant with a heathen nation.

To such critics, we have two points to consider. First, this was not a military agreement, but merely a trade agreement. Israel was not seeking the Phoenicians to supply them with an army but instead, with raw materials and workmen.

Second, as we have hinted above, there is a good possibility that Hiram may not have been such a "heathen" after all. It all depends on how we understand 2 Chronicles 2:11 ff. On the one hand,

the praise of Jehovah on the part of Hiram does not presuppose a full recognition of Jehovah as the only true God, but simply that Hiram regarded the God of Israel as being as real a God as his own deities.^v

Yet on the other hand, we should not look for precise theological confessions of faith as those that characterize people familiar with Renewed Covenant

revelation. Consequently, in our opinion, Hiram may have been a true spiritual brother of Solomon because he trusted in Solomon's God. After all, this is what was supposed to happen to unbelievers outside of Israel who came into contact with godly Israelites. As it states in Deuteronomy 4:6–8, Israel was to serve as a witness to the nations of the wisdom and greatness of God. Accordingly, Hiram was exposed to such a wise God through his relationship with David. And now, since he was also a friend with Solomon, he fully desired to enter into a covenant (formal trade and friendship agreement) with Solomon, "largely a result of the deep impression Solomon's profound wisdom made on him." [Malbim].^{vi}

Thus, Solomon may not have entered into a covenant with an unbeliever making him, "unequally yoked" (c.f. 2 Corinthians chapter six), as some believers may think. Instead, there is a good possibility that Solomon made this covenant with a brother in the Lord. Given the amount of wisdom Solomon possessed and the way he used it in this stage of his life, this seems like a reasonable and good assumption.

ⁱ Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 275.

ⁱⁱ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* ("ISBE"), vol. 2, 718.

ⁱⁱⁱ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 3, 60.

^{iv} ISBE, op. cit., 718.

^v Keil and Delitzsch, op. cit., 60.

^{vi} Hochberg and Rosenberg, op. cit., 48.