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הַפְּטָרָה לְשַׁבַּת חֲנוּכָּה (א')

HAFTARAH FOR FIRST SHABBAT OF ḤANUKKAH

ZECHARIAH 2:14–4:7

In 538 B.C.E., a year after conquering Babylonia, Cyrus the Mede had issued an edict allowing all subject populations to return to their national religious practices. As a result, exiles from Babylonia had returned to Judah with authorization to rebuild the Jerusalem temple, destroyed nearly fifty years earlier. Work on the new temple was postponed, however, when local adversaries first sought to participate and then—after being excluded—prevented the settlers from rebuilding (Ezra 4:1–5,24). In the second year in the reign of Darius I (Ezra 4:4–5,24), the king of Persia permitted construction to resume. That year, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah exhorted the people in God's name to resume the building effort (Ezra 5:1–2). The prophecies in this *haftarah* date from that time. (Construction would take four more years to complete.)

The *haftarah* begins with an announcement that God promises to return to Zion (2:14–17). This requires preparation and purification of the high priest, the Land, and the people. Thus the prophecy continues with the purification and investiture of the high priest and a declaration of God's forgiveness for the people's sins in the Land. This is followed by the prophet's vision of the lampstand (*m'norah*) to be used in the temple and words affirming that communal success will be achieved through the spirit of God.

Priestly concerns and details dominate the *haftarah*. Nevertheless, the prophet mentions royal or secular leadership (3:8, 4:6–9). A notion of dual national leadership—where Joshua the high priest is paired with Zerubbabel, a descendant of David—is evident elsewhere in the prophecies of Zechariah (4:14), and even more clearly in the writings of his contemporaries Haggai (1:1, 2:2) and Ezra (4:3, 5:2).

In his vision, Zechariah's focus on the forth-

coming temple features its *m'norah* (4:1–6), a solid lampstand with seven lamps, flanked on either side by an olive tree. In a passage that follows the *haftarah* (4:10–14), this vision is explained: The lampstand symbolizes God; the seven lamps are “the eyes of the LORD, ranging over the whole earth”; and the two trees are anointed dignitaries (literally, “sons of oil”) who attend “the LORD of all the earth.” Theologically speaking, the Temple objects thus represent divine dominion on earth, and the trees represent its two human stewards (Joshua and Zerubbabel).

By giving Zechariah's prophecy a proclamatory ending—“not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit” (4:7)—the Sages transformed the text into an ever-present divine warning: Groups aiming to “force the end” through military might or by inducing the Temple's restoration should reconsider such plans of action.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR

The *haftarah* is appropriate in that *Ḥanukkah* celebrates the rededication of a repurified temple in Hasmonean times and anticipates a messianic temple in the future.

On the first *Shabbat* of *Ḥanukkah*, a portion of the account of offerings brought by Israelite chieftains (*n'si'im*) is read (from Num. 7). This derives from mishnaic practice, which ruled that “On the (*Shabbat* of) *Ḥanukkah* (one reads) from (the portion dealing with) the (portion about the) chieftains” (M Meg. 3:6). This reading supplements the regular *parashah* and is read from a separate Torah scroll (S.A. O.Ḥ. 684:2).

“Shout for joy, Fair Zion! For lo, I come; and I will dwell in your midst [*v'shakhanti b'tokhekh*].” These opening words of the prophet echo God's

words to Moses when he was first commanded to construct the tabernacle (Exod. 25:8): “Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them [*v’shakhanti b’tokham*].” In this way, the prophet suggests that God’s return will renew divine intimacy with Israel and close the era of exile. Recitation of the chieftains’ offerings commemorates the “dedication” (*hanukkah*) of the wilderness tabernacle (Num. 7:84) and anticipates the new Temple when God again will be present among the people.

Just as the Sages interpreted the construction of the wilderness tabernacle as atonement for the

sin of idolatry (the Golden Calf), the rededication of the Temple marks its purification from ritual pollution. Both shrines thus mark a space of sacred service, new and renewed—a place of divine presence in the earthly realm. Symbolic interpretations of the seven lamps of the *m’norah* in terms of the seven days of Creation and the seven heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and five visible planets), add a cosmic dimension. In this context, the new Temple symbolizes a restoration of the world, a rekindling of the lights of Creation through the pure worship of God.

2¹⁴Shout for joy, Fair Zion! For lo, I come; and I will dwell in your midst—declares the LORD. ¹⁵In that day many nations will attach themselves to the LORD and become His people, and He will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that I was sent to you by the LORD of Hosts.

¹⁶The LORD will take Judah to Himself as His portion in the Holy Land, and He will choose Jerusalem once more.

¹⁷Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD!

For He is roused from His holy habitation.

Zechariah 2:14. and I will dwell in your midst God is aroused to return to Zion from “His holy habitation” in heaven. The language derives from the old tabernacle traditions (“I may dwell among them [*v’shakhanti b’tokham*],” Exod. 25:8). It was used meanwhile to express both God’s dwelling in the temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:13) and the return of God to the post-exilic temple (Ezek. 43:9).

A threefold biblical typology of divine indwelling spans Israelite history. It begins in the wilderness, with a portable shrine built en route to the Holy Land. It peaks in Solomon’s day with the construction of a permanent house for God. And it concludes here, with the restoration to Zion and the building of a new temple for the indwelling of God’s presence on earth.

The Sages turned God’s providential presence

into the noun *Sh’khinah*. The concept came to include divine involvement in the fate of the people Israel wherever they are found. In the Midrash, the *Sh’khinah* suffers with Israel in exile—and will return with it at the time of redemption. In kabbalistic sources from the medieval period on, the *Sh’khinah* came to symbolize a feminine dimension within divinity as well as the heavenly bride with which Israel enters into symbolic marriage on *Shabbat*.

16. The LORD will take Judah . . . as His portion This notion is first found in Deut. 32:9 (speaking of Jacob). The ethnic unit and its territory are one and the same; God will return to claim them both.

Holy Land Hebrew: *admat ha-kodesh*; a striking formulation—unique in the Bible—asserting the sanctity of the whole land of Israel.

ב ¹⁴רָנִי וְשִׂמְחִי בַת־צִיּוֹן פִּי הַגְּנִיבָא
וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָךְ נְאֻם־יְהוָה: ¹⁵וְנִלְוֹוּ גוֹיִם
רַבִּים אֶל־יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְהָיוּ לִי לְעַם
וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָךְ וַיְדַעַתְּ פִּי־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֶיךָ:
¹⁶וְנָחַל יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוּדָה חֶלְקוֹ עַל אֲדַמַּת
הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבָחַר עוֹד בִּירוּשָׁלַם:
¹⁷הִס כָּל־בָּשָׂר מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה
כִּי יַעֲזוּר מִמַּעוֹן קֹדְשׁוֹ: ס

3 He further showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the LORD, and the Accuser standing at his right to accuse him. ²But [the angel of] the LORD said to the Accuser, “The LORD rebuke you, O Accuser; may the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! For this is a brand plucked from the fire.” ³Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments when he stood before the angel. ⁴The latter spoke up and said to his attendants, “Take the filthy garments off him!” And he said to him, “See, I have removed your guilt from you, and you shall be clothed in [priestly] robes.” ⁵Then he gave the order, “Let a pure diadem be placed on his head.” And they placed the pure diadem on his head and clothed him in [priestly] garments, as the angel of the LORD stood by.

⁶And the angel of the LORD charged Joshua as follows: ⁷“Thus said the LORD of Hosts: If you walk in My paths and keep My charge, you in turn will rule My House and guard My courts, and I will permit you to move about among these attendants. ⁸Hearken well, O High Priest Joshua, you and your fellow priests sitting before you! For those men are a sign that I am going to bring My servant the Branch. ⁹For mark well this stone which I place before Joshua, a single stone with seven eyes. I will execute its engraving—declares the LORD of Hosts—and I will remove that country’s guilt in a single day.

Zechariah 3:1–2. In this vision of a heavenly court, God is the judge, the high priest Joshua is the defendant, and the angel and the Accuser (*satan*) are the defense and prosecuting counsels, respectively. Presumably the Accuser has contended that the priest is unfit for office, which would explain why God now rebukes the Accuser. This divine affirmation legitimates the priest and even pronounces him fit to serve as an angel in heaven.

8. My servant the Branch Who or what this signifies is unspecified. Probably the prophet is referring to Zerubbabel (see 4:6, below); mention by name would have been unwise, for such expression of Israelite royalist hopes would have

ג וַיִּרְאֵנִי אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַגָּדוֹל עֹמֵד
לִפְנֵי מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה וְהַשָּׁטָן עֹמֵד עַל־יְמִינוֹ
לְשׁוֹטְנוֹ: ² וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׁטָן יִגְעַר
יְהוָה בְּךָ הַשָּׁטָן וַיִּגְעַר יְהוָה בְּךָ הַבְּחָר
בִּירוּשָׁלַם הַלּוֹא זֶה אוֹד מִצֶּל מֵאֵשׁ:
³ וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ הָיָה לְבָשׁ בְּגָדִים צוּאִים וְעֹמֵד
לִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ: ⁴ וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָעֹמְדִים
לִפְנָיו לֵאמֹר הֲסִירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצּוּאִים
מֵעַלָּיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רְאֵה הֲעֵבַרְתִּי מֵעַלְיָךְ
עֹנָךְ וְהִלְבַּשׁ אֹתָךְ מַחְלָצוֹת: ⁵ וַאֲמַר
יְשִׁימוּ צָנִיף טְהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיְשִׁימוּ
הַצָּנִיף הַטְּהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּלְבְּשֵׁהוּ בְּגָדִים
וּמַלְאָךְ יְהוָה עֹמֵד:

⁶ וַיַּעַד מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה בִּיהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר:
⁷ כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אִם־בְּדַרְכֵי תִלְךָ
וְאִם אֶת־מִשְׁמַרְתִּי תִשְׁמֹר וְגַם־אֶת־הַ
תְּדִין אֶת־בֵּיתִי וְגַם תִּשְׁמֹר אֶת־חֻצְרֵי
וְנִתְּתִי לָךְ מֵהַלְכִים בֵּין הָעֹמְדִים הָאֵלֶּה:
⁸ שְׁמַע־נָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל אֶת־הַ
וְרַעְיָךְ הַיֹּשְׁבִים לִפְנֵיךְ כִּי־אֲנֹשִׁי מוֹפֵת
הֵמָּה כִּי־הִנְנִי מֵבִיא אֶת־עַבְדִּי צִמָּח:
⁹ כִּי הִנֵּה הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לִפְנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת שִׁבְעָה עֵינַיִם הִנְנִי מִפְתָּח
פְּתוּחָה נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּמִשְׁתֵּי אֶת־עוֹן

provoked the Persian government. The metaphor of a branch (*tzemah*) used to depict a future king was already used by Isaiah (4:2). It was then developed fully in Jeremiah’s oracles about a descendant of David whom God will establish to bring victory and to rule in justice (23:5–6, 33:14–16). Later, in the Rabbinic era, it would give rise to interpretations of messianic expectancy. It would also be featured in the 15th benediction of the *Amidah* (“the benediction of David”), which opens with a petition that God cause “the Branch of David to flourish.” This messianic prayer would become the last blessing to be added to the *Amidah*.

¹⁰In that day—declares the LORD of Hosts—you will be inviting each other to the shade of vines and fig trees.”

4 The angel who talked with me came back and woke me as a man is wakened from sleep. ²He said to me, “What do you see?” And I answered, “I see a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl above it. The lamps on it are seven in number, and the lamps above it have seven pipes; ³and by it are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and one on its left.” ⁴I, in turn, asked the angel who talked with me, “What do those things mean, my lord?” ⁵“Do you not know what those things mean?” asked the angel who talked with me; and I said, “No, my lord.” ⁶Then he explained to me as follows:

“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit—said the LORD of Hosts. ⁷Whoever you are, O great mountain in the path of Zerubbabel, turn into level ground! For he shall produce that excellent stone; it shall be greeted with shouts of ‘Beautiful! Beautiful!’”

Zechariah 4:2. I see a lampstand Zechariah’s vision of both lampstand (*m’norah*) and lamps (or spouts) differs from the two major descriptions of these sacred vessels elsewhere in Scripture (Exod. 25:31–40; 1 Kings 7:49). The earliest representation of a seven-branched candelabrum appears on the coins minted for Antigonus Mattathias, the last of the Hasmonean dynasty (40–37 B.C.E.). After the destruction of the Temple by Titus, Domitian’s masons (ca. 81

הָאֶרֶץ־הַהִיא בְּיוֹם אֶחָד: ¹⁰ בְּיוֹם הַהוּא נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תִּקְרְאוּ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ אֶל־תַּחַת גַּפְנֵן וְאֶל־תַּחַת תְּאֵנָה:

ד וַיָּשָׁב הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי וַיַּעֲרִינִי כְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִעוֹר מִשְׁנָתוֹ: ² וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי מַה אַתָּה רֹאֶה וַיֹּאמֶר רְאִיתִי אֶת־הַמְּנוֹרָה זֹהָב כְּלֵה וְגִלְגָּל עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ וְשִׁבְעָה נִרְתִּיחָ עָלֶיהָ שִׁבְעָה וְשִׁבְעָה מוֹצְקוֹת לְנֵרוֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ: ³ וּשְׁנַיִם זֵיתִים עָלֶיהָ אֶחָד מִיְמִין הַגִּלְגָּל וְאֶחָד עַל־שְׂמֹאלָהּ: ⁴ וָאֶעַן וַאֲמַר אֶל־הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי לֹא־אֲנִי יָדָעֵן הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתָּ מַה־הֵמָּה אֵלֶּה וַאֲמַר לֹא אֲנִי: ⁶ וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי לֵאמֹר

זֶה דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־זְרֻבָּבֶל לֵאמֹר לֹא בְּחֵיל וְלֹא בְּכֹחַ כִּי אִם־בְּרוּחֵי אֱמֶר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ⁷ מִי־אַתָּה הָרֵה־הַגְּדוֹל לִפְנֵי זְרֻבָּבֶל לְמִישׁוֹר וְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הָאֶבֶן הַרְאֵשָׁה תְּשֻׂאוֹת תָּן תָּן לָהּ: פ

c.e.) carved such a candelabrum on his victory arch.

6. Zerubbabel A grandson of King Jehoiachin of Judah (1 Chron. 3:17–19) and the secular head of the repatriated community (Hag. 1:1) [Transl.].

⁷ The details of this oracle have long been subject to dispute. The phrase “that excellent stone” seems related to Mesopotamian ceremonies in which the monarch dedicated a new temple with a stone from the former temple.