YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**Understanding the haftarot**

**By Harav Yaakov Medan**

**The Haftara for Parashat Beha’alotekha**

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Dedicated in memory of

Rabbanit Yocheved bat Todros Menos Eliyahu *z"l*

whose *yahrzeit* is the 14th of Sivan,

by her granddaughter, Vivian Singer

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Shout out and be joyful, daughter Zion, for I am coming, and I will dwell in your midst – the Lord has spoken. Many nations will join themselves to the Lord on that day, and they will be My people. I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the Lord of Hosts sent me to you. The Lord will take possession of Yehuda as His portion of holy ground, and He will choose Jerusalem once again. Hush, all flesh, before the Lord, for He has stirred from His holy abode.

Then He showed me Yehoshua the High Priest standing before an angel of the Lord with the Adversary on his right to oppose him. The Lord said to the Adversary: The Lord drives you away, Adversary. The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, drives you away. Yes, this is a firebrand saved from the fire. And Yehoshua, wearing filthy clothing, was standing before the angel, who spoke and said to those standing before him, "Take those filthy clothes off him." Then the angel said to him, "See, I have removed your guilt from you and dressed you in finery." I said, "Place a pure turban on his head," and they placed a pure turban on his head. They dressed him in clothing. The angel of the Lord remained standing. Then that angel of the Lord testified regarding Yehoshua: "So says the Lord of Hosts: If you walk in My ways, if you keep My watch, if you judge My House, and guard My courtyards, then I will give you walkers among these who are standing. Listen, Yehoshua the High Priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men of wonders: Behold, I am bringing My servant Tzemach. Upon the stone that I set before Yehoshua, one stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, and I will wipe away the guilt of this land in one day. On that day – the Lord of Hosts has spoken – you will call one to another: Come under the shade of the vine; come under the shade of the fig."

Then the angel with whom I had spoken returned and roused me like a man stirring from his sleep. He said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see a candelabrum of pure gold, its bowl at the top. It has seven lamps – seven – and seven indentations for the lamps, which are at the top. Next to it are two olive trees, one to the right of the bowl and one to its left." I spoke and said to the angel with whom I spoke, "What are these, my lord?" And the angel with whom I spoke replied and said, "You know what these are." I said, "No, my lord." Then he spoke and said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubavel: Not with valor and not with strength, but with My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts. Who are you, great mountain before Zerubavel? Surely it will become a level plain. He will remove the re-foundation stone with clamor: Favor, favor to her!" (*Zekharya* 2:14-4:7)[[1]](#footnote-1)

**I. The Connection Between the *Haftara* and the *Parasha***

The third section of our *haftara* (in the artificial division above, based on the division of the chapters) describes a gold candelabrum (*menora*), with seven lamps, that heralds the Temple that will be built – the Second Temple. Our *parasha* also opens with the *menora* and its lamps.

The same passages are read as the *haftara* for Shabbat Chanuka (when there two Shabbatot Chanuka, the *haftara* for the first Shabbat Chanuka) owing to the mitzvaof lighting Chanuka lamps, which brings to mind the dedication of the Temple, the lighting of the lamps in it, and the miracle of the cruse of oil. In my remarks for Shabbat Chanuka,[[2]](#footnote-2) I focused on the connection between the *haftara* and the miracle of Chanuka. Here, we will hardly deal with that at all.

Zekharya’s prophecy included eight successive visions. Our *haftara* includes the end of the third, the fourth vision, the fifth vision, and the beginning of its interpretation. The third vision deals with the building and development of Jerusalem, and its last four verses are the beginning of our *haftara*.

**II. "Many Nations Will Join Themselves to the Lord"**

Many nations will join themselves to the Lord on that day, and they will be My people. I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the Lord of Hosts sent me to you. (2:14-15)

This universal vision at the beginning of Zekharya's prophecy requires explanation. Why is a prophet in the days of the return to Zion, when the returnees are struggling for their very survival, prophesying about the repair of the world in the end of days, when all the nations will stream to see the glory of the Lord in the place of His *Shekhina*?

Koresh's proclamation, which allowed the people of Israel to return and build the second Temple, failed to a large extent. After the altar was built, a royal ban on building the Temple was issued because of libels on the part of those who had settled the land after the Temple was destroyed and the people of Israel were exiled. Some of the nations who were there had been brought in by King Esar Chadon of Assyria to replace the inhabitants of Shomron when the kingdom of Shomron was destroyed. Some were Edomites who had flocked to the land, desolate of its people, after the Nabataeans and other Arab tribes invaded their own land. And some were just people from the surrounding area who saw the land abandoned by its people and immigrated to it.

Now, fifty-two years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Jews began to return to Israel following the proclamation of Koresh, but not in droves. About forty-four thousand Jews returned from Persia and Babylon, and they encountered strong opposition to their re-establishment in their own country.

In the second year of the reign of Daryavesh, eighteen years after the altar was erected and the foundations of the Temple were laid (but its construction was stopped), two prophets joined together to deliver the word of God. Chagai and Zekharya began to command and encourage the people and their leaders – Zerubavel son of She'altiel, a descendant of Yehoyakhin and the kings of Yehuda, and Yehoshua son of Yehotzadak, a descendant of the High Priests – to complete the building of the Temple, despite the fact that the permit to do so had been rescinded. But how could the returnees to Zion succeed in building the Temple without permission, when their neighbors were watching their every step, quick to inform the authorities about their every move?

The two prophets apparently had two different, but complementary, answers to this question. Chagai adopted an approach that another leader, David Ben-Gurion, would reference many years later: "It is not important what the nations say; what matters is what the Jews do." Chagai only examines Israel's relationship with their Father in Heaven, who is all-powerful and who alone can, according to His will, lead them to success. According to Chagai, the drought, poverty, and hunger the people experienced at the time signaled God's disapproval of their failure to build His house:

Is it the time for you yourselves to sit under roofs in your homes while this House lies desolate? Now says the Lord of Hosts: Take your ways to heart. You sow much but bring in little, eat but are not satisfied, drink but remain sober. You clothe yourselves but are not warmed, and anyone who earns wages receives them into a pouch full of holes… You expect much but receive little. You bring it home; I cause it to wither. Why? Because of My House which remains desolate while each of you keeps running back to his own house, says the Lord of Hosts. Therefore, the skies lock up the dew above you; the land locks up its produce. I will call forth a drought over the land and the mountains; over the grains, the young wine, and the fresh oil; over everything the land produces. I will declare a drought over man and animal, even over the labor of their hands. (*Chagai* 1:4-11)

After they begin building, the prophet encourages them by saying that God will help them succeed in their building, and the nations will be compelled to come pay homage in the House of the Lord:

For so says the Lord of Hosts: One more thing, but a small thing, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all the nations, they will come with the riches of all the nations, and I will fill this House with glory, says the Lord of Hosts. For Mine is the silver and Mine the gold; the Lord of Hosts has spoken. The glory of this latter House will be greater than the glory of the first, says the Lord of Hosts, and I will bestow peace upon this place. The Lord of Hosts has spoken. (*Chagai* 2:6-9)

Chagai continues his prophecy two months later, on the eve of Chanuka(!):

Tell Zerubavel, governor of Yehuda: I am going to shake the heavens and earth, I will overturn the thrones of kingdoms, and I will destroy the mighty dominion of nations; I will overturn the chariot and its riders. The horses and their riders will fall, every man cut down by the sword of his brother. On that day – the Lord of Hosts has spoken – I will take you, Zerubavel son of She’altiel, My servant – the Lord has spoken – and wear you close like a signet ring, for it is you whom I have chosen. The Lord of Hosts has spoken. (*Chagai* 2:21-22)

Zekharya, prophet of our *haftara*, continues in the same vein as Chagai with respect to the Divine wrath that will be directed against the nations, but he adds a more conciliatory perspective in the prophecy that begins a few verses before our *haftara* and continues into it:

For so says the Lord of Hosts: In the wake of Glory He sent me to the nations that have plundered you, for he who harms you harms that which is reflected in His eyes. I will brandish My hand over them, and they will be plundered by their slaves. You will know that the Lord of Hosts sent me.

Shout out and be joyful, daughter Zion, for I am coming, and I will dwell in your midst – the Lord has spoken. Many nations will join themselves to the Lord on that day, and they will be My people. I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the Lord of Hosts sent me to you. (*Zekharya* 2:12-15)

The doubled phrase "that the Lord of Hosts sent me" emphasizes the relationship between the two parts of the prophecy. In the first part, the nations will receive their punishment; in the second part, in our *haftara*, they themselves will come to the Temple, acknowledge the greatness of God who commanded His children to build His Temple, and join them in doing so. Zekharya continues in this vein in another prophecy concerning the building of the Temple:

So says the Lord of Hosts: Once again nations, dwellers of many cities, will come, and the dwellers of one city will go, saying one to another, one by one, "Let us go entreat the face of the Lord, beseech the Lord of Hosts. I too will go." Then many nations will come – great peoples – to beseech the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, to entreat the face of the Lord. So says the Lord of Hosts: It will be in those days that ten men of many languages will cling, they will cling to the hem of a Jewish man and say, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (*Zekharya* 8:20-23)

**III. “Hush, All Flesh”**

Hush, all flesh, before the Lord, for He has stirred from His holy abode. (2:17)

Zekharya uses a metaphor that may sound jarring to our ears when applied to the *Shekhina*, even though it is only a metaphor: Now, when the nations are oppressing Israel, God is asleep, as it were, and we must wait for Him to wake up. This is precisely how the prophet Eliyahu mocked the worshippers of Ba'al on Mount Carmel:

At noon, Eliyahu began to mock them: "Shout louder," he said, "for he is a god – he may be in conversation, or busy, or out traveling; he may be asleep – he might wake!" (I *Melakhim* 18:27)

Such expressions are also used elsewhere with regard to God, however; for instance, in *Tehillim*:

Stir – why do You sleep, Lord? Rouse Yourself! Do not forsake us forever. (*Tehillim* 44:24)

Then the Lord awoke as if from sleep, like a warrior shaking off wine, and beat back His foes, subjecting them to lasting shame. (Ibid*.* 78:65-66)

The prophets and the psalmist must have known their limits with regard to the personifying metaphors they used with respect to God. We would not dare to use such metaphors.

The phrase, "Hush (הס), all flesh, before the Lord," also requires explanation. Zekharya may be responding to the harsh words of the prophet Chavakuk, who prophesied in the days of Menashe king of Yehuda about the rise of the Chaldeans, the destroyers of Jerusalem. When he saw this harsh vision, Chavakuk was saddened to the point of hurling harsh words at God:

How much longer must I implore You, O Lord, though You do not listen. I scream out to You "violence!" yet You bring no salvation. Why then do You show me this evil? You who see the oppression, why are ruin and corruption before me so that strife endures and contention rises? This then is why law will cease to exist and justice will never prevail, for the wicked besiege the righteous, and justice becomes twisted. (*Chavakuk* 1:2-4)

When God opened his eyes, the prophet concluded his prophecy, before beginning the "prayer of Chavakuk the prophet" in chapter 3, with the sentence:

But the Lord is in His heavenly dwelling. **All the earth, be silent (הס) before Him**. (*Chavakuk* 2:20)

Years passed; Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed; the people fell by the sword and were brought into captivity. Now, at the time of the return to Zion, just before the building of the Second Temple, Zekharya continues the prophecy "All the earth, be silent before Him," with the prophecy "Hush, all flesh, before the Lord," and with the statement that God has returned to His Temple and raised His people from the dust.

**IV. The Fourth Vision – The Sin of Yehoshua the High Priest**

Then He showed me Yehoshua the High Priest standing before an angel of the Lord with the Adversary on his right to oppose him… And Yehoshua, wearing filthy clothing, was standing before the angel. (3:1-3)

Yehoshua son of Yehotzadak was the grandson of Seraya – the last High Priest of the First Temple, who was executed by the Chaldeans (II *Melakhim* 25:18-21) – and was one of the two leaders who returned to the Land of Israel in the wake of Koresh's proclamation. In Zekharya's vision, Yehoshua is being judged, his clothing is filthy, and the Adversary is opposing him.

Yehoshua's sin is not explained in the text. The commentators tend, in light of the accounts from the time of Ezra andNechemya (and in the wake of the Targum and *Sanhedrin* 93a), to blame him for the fact that his descendants married non-Jewish women. This sin is not stated explicitly here, and it is doubtful whether in the second year of Daryavesh, a long time before Ezra and Nechemya, Yehoshua's clothing was already dirtied by this sin.

There may be an allusion to his sin below, in the warning that the angel of God gives to Yehoshua:

Listen, Yehoshua the High Priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men of wonders: Behold, I am bringing My servant Tzemach… On that day – the Lord of Hosts has spoken – you will call one to another: Come under the shade of the vine; come under the shade of the fig. (3:8-10)

This warning mentions Tzemach, a servant of God, and his role in leading the people. There may be a hint here to a leadership dispute that arose between Yehoshua and his supporters, on one hand, and Zerubavel son of She'altiel and his supporters, on the other. Zerubavel was of royal descent, and Yehoshua descended from the High Priests. Who would be in charge? The prophet warns Yehoshua to preserve the honor and authority of "Tzemach," a name reserved for the son of David who will redeem the people:

Days are soon approaching, declares the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous scion (*tzemach tzaddik*)for David. He will reign as king and prosper and dispense justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Yehuda will be saved, and Israel will dwell in safety. (*Yirmeyahu* 23:5-6)

The allusion to Zerubavel is explicitly stated later in *Zekharya*:

Take silver and gold; make crowns and set one on the head of Yehoshua son of Yehotzadak the High Priest. Tell him, so says the Lord of Hosts: There is a man; Tzemach is his name. He will come to flower from where he is and build the Sanctuary of the Lord. Lo, he will build the Sanctuary of the Lord. He will wear majesty; he will sit and rule on his throne. The priest, also, will sit on his own throne, and between them there will be peaceful counsel. (*Zekharya* 6:11-13)

"Tzemach"–Zerubavel is tasked with building the Temple and governing. Zekharya prophesies that "there will be peaceful counsel" between him and Yehoshua, which implies that there was previously a quarrel between them. The future peaceful counsel between them is also hinted at in our prophecy, in the words: "You will call one to another: Come under the shade of the vine; come under the shade of the fig."

Indeed, there is an allusion to the dispute already at the beginning of the construction, when they first arrive in the Land of Israel:

Then Yeshua son of Yotzadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubavel son of She'altiel and his brothers, rose up and built an altar for the God of Israel. (*Ezra* 3:2)

This verse suggests that the builders who erected the altar of God were comprised of two groups. Later, Scripture emphasizes that the two groups united into one:

Then Yeshua, his sons and brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, and the sons of Yehuda, rose up *as one* to supervise the builders of the House of God. (*Ezra* 3:9)

It may be presumed that the foreigners who wished to join exploited this internal dispute to involve themselves in the construction:

The adversaries of Yehuda and Binyamin heard that the returned exiles were building a Sanctuary for the Lord, God of Israel. So they approached Zerubavel and the family heads and said to them: "Let us join you in building it, for we too worship your God and have been sacrificing to Him ever since the days of Esar Chadon, king of Assyria, who brought us here." But Zerubavel and Yeshua and the rest of the family heads of Israel replied: "You shall have no part with us building a House for our God; rather, it is our people who, alone, shall build a House for the Lord, God of Israel, as Koresh, king of Persia, has commanded us to do.” (*Ezra* 4:1-3)

Zerubavel and Yehoshua assure the foreigners that the two of them can work together, and do not need their mediation or help.

**V. The Words of Defense**

The Lord said to the Adversary: The Lord drives you away, Adversary. The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, drives you away. Yes, this is a firebrand saved from the fire. And Yehoshua, wearing filthy clothing, was standing before the angel, who spoke and said to those standing before him, "Take those filthy clothes off him." Then the angel said to him, "See, I have removed your guilt from you and dressed you in finery." I said, "Place a pure turban on his head," and they placed a pure turban on his head. They dressed him in clothing. The angel of the Lord remained standing. (3:2-5)

Two arguments are raised in Yehoshua's defense at his trial. The first argument is: "Yes, this is a firebrand saved from the fire." According to the plain meaning of the verses, Yehoshua is a remnant of a distinguished priestly family, many of whom probably died of famine, war, or execution at the time of the destruction of the Temple. Yehotzadak, Yehoshua's father, survived the destruction, was exiled to Babylon, and fathered Yehoshua. The attribute of mercy stands to his right to prevent the entire house of the High Priests from being wiped out.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The second argument is that a warning must be given before punishment – and it is hoped that Yehoshua will indeed receive the warning and act accordingly, including towards "Tzemach"-Zerubavel:

Then that angel of the Lord testified regarding Yehoshua: So says the Lord of Hosts: If you walk in My ways, if you keep My watch, if you judge My House, and guard My courtyards, then I will give you walkers among these who are standing. (3:6-7)

We will deal below with the seven-eyed stone depicted next in this vision.

**VI. The Fifth Vision – The Candelabrum**

Then the angel with whom I had spoken returned and roused me like a man stirring from his sleep. He said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see a candelabrum of pure gold, its bowl at the top. It has seven lamps – seven – and seven indentations for the lamps, which are at the top. Next to it are two olive trees, one to the right of the bowl and one to its left." (4:1-3)

As noted above, I dealt extensively with the details of this vision in my remarks on the *haftara* for Shabbat Chanuka. Some relate the vision of the *menora* to the miracle of the cruse of oil that was performed for Yehuda the Maccabi and his brothers when the Temple was purified from the impurity of the Greeks and rededicated. With regard to *Parashat Beha’alotekha*,however, it suffices to consider, via Zekharya’s vision, the seven-lamped *menora* that was in the *Mishkan* and the Temple. The candelabrum seen by Zekharya includes an additional bowl at its top, not part of the Temple *menora*,which dripped oil into the lamps, and two olive trees above it that provided the oil. It seems that this change comes to express the miracle of the perpetual lamp, which burned until the days of Shimon the Righteous:

As long as Shimon the Righteous lived, the western lamp was constant. After he died, they went and found that it had become extinguished. From then onward, they found it sometimes extinguished and sometimes lit. (*Tosefta Sota* 13:7)

What does this prophetic vision express? To answer this question, let us return to the period and the historical background. As stated above, the two prophets, Chagai and Zekharya, encouraged the people to continue building the house of the Lord, despite the rescinding of the permission to build it and despite the watchful eyes and informing lips of the enemies of Yehuda.

Indeed, an official appointed by Daryavesh, king of Persia, over the Land of Israel and the surrounding areas, arrived with his assistant and demanded an explanation for the continued construction. The builders, led by Zerubavel and Yehoshua, showed them the permit granted by Koresh while ignoring the order to stop the construction. The official and his assistant sent an inquiry to the king of Persia to clarify the matter of the permit, and recorded the names of the chief builders in order to punish them should it turn out that they built without a permit.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Doubts then begin to arise as to whether taking the risk of building without a valid permit was the right step – and more generally, whether the returnees to Zion are indeed in a process of redemption, which guarantees God's help, or whether the redemption process is void because such a small number of people returned to Zion, and they too are wearing "filthy clothing," using the wording of the prophecy above, and have entered into an unjustified adventure with the Persian authorities.

It is possible that this question arose on the eve of Tisha be-Av, with a practical question of whether they should fast on Tisha be-Av because the destruction continues, or whether they are in the midst of redemption and the fast of the fifth month should turn into a day of joy:

To ask the priests at the House of the Lord of Hosts and the prophets, too: Should I weep in the fifth month, deny myself as I have done these many years? (*Zekharya* 7:3)

If the above is correct, it is possible that the prophecy of the vision of the candelabrum comes to testify that despite the trouble with the Persian official, the Temple will be built and the *menora* will be lit. Zekharya answers the people's question with a comforting prophecy about the building of Jerusalem and the Temple, and indeed Daryavesh approved the continuation of the construction, encouraged it, and supported it financially.

Why exactly does the candelabrum express the continued construction and upcoming dedication of the Temple? This was also the case in the days of the Hasmoneans; the Temple was rededicated with the lighting of the *menora*. Why? The answer to this question is hidden in an ancient *baraita*:

"Outside the veil of testimony shall [Aharon] order it" (*Bamidbar* 27:21). Does He require its light? Surely, during the entire forty years that the Israelites travelled in the wilderness, they travelled only by His light! But it is a testimony to mankind that the Divine Presence rests in Israel. (*Shabbat* 22b)

According to the *baraita*, the *menora* serves as testimony to the resting of the *Shekhina*. In a proper state, the testimony to the resting of the *Shekhina* in the Temple is the Ark of the Testimony, and inside it, the Tablets of the Testimony, which were written by the finger of God. But the Second Temple contained no Ark and no tablets; the Holy of Holies was empty. Thus, the testimony to the resting of the *Shekhina* moved to the *menora*, whose light represents the light of the Torah, which was supposed to radiate to us from the Holy of Holies, from the Ark. The prophet Zekharya sees the candelabrum as a vision of the completion of the building of the Temple.

The connection between the sight of the lit candelabrum and the hope that the Temple will indeed be built is in fact so logical that the question arises in the opposite direction: Why didn't the prophet Zekharya understand this by himself? The angel of God also expresses surprise that Zekharya has to ask about the meaning of the vision:

I spoke and said to the angel with whom I spoke, "What are these, my lord?" And the angel with whom I spoke replied and said, "You know what these are." I said, "No, my lord." (4:4-5)

Indeed, Zekharya saw the prophetic vision, and considering the political uncertainty in the wake of the events mentioned above, its meaning seems easily understandable. Zekharya could have simply told the confused people that God would help them continue to build the Temple. This, however, would be an intellectual-political interpretation of the prophetic vision, and Zekharya sought a prophetic understanding, not a logical conclusion. He did not let go of the angel until he heard in a revelation:

Zerubavel’s hands founded this House, and his hands will complete it. You will know that the Lord of Hosts sent me to you. (4:9)

In this way is the true prophet distinguished from the false prophets, who draw logical political conclusions from their "prophecies" and bring them to the people as the word of God.

**VII. The Candelabrum and the Stone**

The last two visions include a stone and the candelabrum. Let us recall the vision of the stone:

Behold, I am bringing My servant Tzemach. Upon the stone that I set before Yehoshua, one stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, and I will wipe away the guilt of this land in one day. (3:8-9)

Adjacent visions of a stone and a candelabrum bring to mind the words of the Mishna:

There was a stone in front of the *menora*, with three steps on which the priest stood in order to prepare the lights. (*Tamid* 3:9)[[5]](#footnote-5)

The stone in front of the candelabrum expresses the appearance of Tzemach, the servant of God – namely, Zerubavel, of the seed of Yehoyakhin, who was destined to be the first king during the period of the return to Zion. The stone signifies resilience and strength, which are supposed to characterize the kingdom of Israel. The stone has seven eyes (*einayim*), that is to say, openings of flowing springs (*ma'ayanot*), which provide an abundance of water. The stone is the first level to which the priest must ascend before he reaches the candelabrum itself.

The eyes are described later in the prophecy as eyes that see:

You will know that the Lord of Hosts sent me to you, for whosoever scorned the day of small things will rejoice seeing the measuring stone in Zerubavel's hand. These seven, they are the eyes of the Lord, roaming throughout the land. (4:10)

Is there a connection between an *ayin* as a wellspring and an *ayin* that looks and sees? The connection is usually understood through the tears of the eye, which may rise up like a spring. Here, we will take the connection in a different direction, which emerges from the verses in *Devarim*:

The land that you are crossing over to possess is a land of hills and valleys; it is watered by the sky's rains. It is a land the Lord your God watches over; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the year's opening to its end. (*Devarim* 11:11-12)

God's eyes, which watch over His land, make sure to send rain down to it and satiate it in accordance with the good deeds of Israel. This is how God's land becomes "a land of streams and springs (*ayanot*)and deep waters gushing out to the valleys and the hills" (*Devarim* 8:7).

Let us summarize: The stone in front of Yehoshua and in the hand of Zerubavel watches over God's people and bestows good on His land. These are the functions of the king. The *menora* shines with the light of God and the light of its testimony about the *Shekhina* that rests upon Israel. This light allows the seven eyes of the stone to look well, by the light of the seven lamps of the *menora*, upon the people of Israel.

**VIII. The Priest and the King**

The two authorities that lead the people, like Moshe and Aharon during the exodus from Egypt and in the wilderness, are the monarchy and the priesthood. These authorities should be separate, and God alone stands above the two of them. The king is mainly concerned with the "here and now," with the new emerging reality, with practical leadership. The priest is preoccupied with eternity, with the roots of the relationship between God and His people. In this place, we find the Temple. Moshe built the *Mishkan*, and Zerubavel must lead the construction of the Temple by correctly navigating between the rulers of Persia and the enemies of Yehuda. Aharon served in the *Mishkan*, and this is to be the role of Yehoshua son of Yehotzadak in the Temple.

The fourth vision warns Yehoshua, after he dresses in finery and wears a pure turban on his head, about the function of the servant of the Lord, Tzemach; about the stone that stands before the candelabrum; about the king; about Zerubavel.

The fifth vision is meant, based on its continuation, to warn Zerubavel about maintaining the priesthood – about the lamp that lights the path of the stone and its eyes:

Then he spoke and said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubavel: Not with valor and not with strength, but with My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts. Who are you, great mountain before Zerubavel? Surely it will become a level plain. He will remove the re-foundation stone with clamor: Favor, favor to her!" (4:6-7)

In my understanding, this verse (like many others in Scripture) should be read as follows: Not **only** with valor and not **only** with strength, but **also** with My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts. The way of the king is with valor and strength, and the priesthood and the Temple come to add the spirit, the spirit of God, to all that is done in the kingdom. The king must listen to the members of the priesthood and allow them to participate in the process of redemption. The hands of Zerubavel will build the Temple, as emerges from the verses above, but "the two sons of the anointed ones," the two who are anointed with oil, will work together and reduce the natural tension between the priesthood and the monarchy:

He said, "These are the two sons of the anointed ones who stand beside the Lord of all the land." (4:14)

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. Unless indicated otherwise, all references are to the book of *Zekharya*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/neviim/sefer-zekharia/chanuka-and-He-will-choose-Jerusalem-once-more> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. a. This type of argument was made by the wise woman of Tekoa, to David, concerning the family's desire to execute her son who had murdered his brother (it should be remembered that her story was only a parable): "And now, the whole family has risen against your servant, saying, 'Give over the one who struck his brother, so we can put him to death for ending his brother's life – we will destroy the heir as well.' They would extinguish my last remaining ember, leaving my husband without name or remnant on the face of the earth" (II *Shmuel* 14:7).

   b. The Jerusalem Talmud asserts, somewhat similarly, that Yehoshua was a firebrand saved from the fire of the destruction of the first Temple: "Rabbi Yochanan said: Eighty thousand young priests fled into the fire places of the Temple, and they were all burned, and of all of them only Yehoshua son of Yehotzadak the High Priest survived, as it is stated: 'Yes, this is a firebrand saved from the fire" (*Ta'anit* 4:5).

   Another *midrash* connects Yehoshua son of Yehotzadak to two adulterous false prophets in the Babylonian exile, whom Nevukhadnetzar burned, as he had attempted to burn Chananya, Mishael, and Azarya. They asked that Yehoshua son of Yehotzadak be cast into the fiery furnace with them, and in the end, they were burned, whereas he was saved because of his righteousness: "Achav son of Kulya and Tzidkiya son of Ma'asiya were false prophets, and they committed adultery with the wives of their friends… [Nevukhadnetzar] said: Is this possible? The God of this nation hates illicit intercourse! I will test them like I tested Chananya, Mishael, and Azarya. If they survive, all is good; and if not, they are false prophets… Since they saw their trouble, they joined Yehoshua son of Yehotzadak the High Priest to them… What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do to them? They were burned, and he was saved. 'Yes, this is a firebrand saved from the fire'" (*Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 24). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See *Ezra* chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The image of the Temple *menora* became the symbol of the State of Israel. It was copied from the inscription on the Arch of Titus in Rome, which expresses the Roman victory over the armies of the Jews and over the Jewish spirit, which found expression in the Temple that was destroyed. In the relief, the victorious soldiers are seen carrying the *menora* (and other items) as the spoils of Titus' victory. The "return" of the image of the candelabrum to the institutions of the State of Israel comes to express the re-establishment of Israel after that destruction and our answer to the Romans that their victory over us was only temporary. The *menora*, according to that copy, has three steps at its base, thus contradicting our tradition that it stood on three legs. The prophecy in our *haftara* and the *mishna* in tractate *Tamid* allow us to understand that we are looking at an image of the *menora* with a three-stepped stone in front of it. The function of the stone is not only technical, but essential, as will be explained below. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)