

HAFTARAH EXHORTATIONS: Haftarah VaYak'hel-Pekudei

by Mark Huey posted 21 March, 2009 www.outreachisrael.net

1 Kings 7:13-8:21
Ezekiel 45:16-46:18

“Glorious Details and More”

One of the principal blessings of reviewing the Torah and Haftarah teachings each year is the annual reminder that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is personally concerned about the details of life, and how He wants to be intimately involved with His chosen people. This week the last six chapters of Exodus are considered (Exodus 35:1-38:20; 38:21-40:38). We see that not only are the construction details of the Tabernacle outlined, but the work is completed by those gifted with the ability to fabricate all that the Lord requires. After the willing hearts of the Israelites bring forth a freewill offering of materials, the Lord then provides skilled craftsmen, like Bezalel of Judah and Oholiab of Dan, to follow His precise instructions:

“The Israelites, all the men and women, whose heart moved them to bring *material* for all the work, which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill offering to the LORD. Then Moses said to the sons of Israel, ‘See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship; to make designs for working in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work. He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple *and* in scarlet *material*, and in fine linen, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs” (Exodus 35:29-35).

After completing the instructions for building the moveable Tabernacle, the presence of the Lord is revealed as He fills the Tabernacle with His glory. This description of God’s glory filling the Tabernacle—to the point of preventing Moses from entering—provides a vivid reminder that human beings cannot often stand, or in this case, occupy the same space as His glorious presence:

“He erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work. 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 had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel” (Exodus 40:33-38).

Unsurprisingly, when the Sages searched for a complimentary passage, the construction of the First Temple was the obvious parallel. 1 Kings chs. 7-8, where the building of Solomon’s edifice on the Temple Mount is recorded, was selected. The record here lists many of the specific details about the construction project. Yet in contrast, rather than using the materials supplied by the generous hearts of the people, King Solomon turns to the neighboring Kingdom of Tyre for not only materials—but also skilled labor. God uniquely gifted a craftsman named Hiram, who had been the son of a man from Tyre and a Naphtalite woman:

“Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was a widow’s son from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in bronze; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill for doing any work in bronze. So he came to King Solomon and performed all his work” (1 Kings 7:13-14).

Hiram’s mixed heritage was not at all an issue; he possessed God-given abilities and skills to work with bronze—exactly what was needed for the Temple project (1 Kings 7:15-45). The

Temple that was built, after all, would not only be for Israel, but “the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel” (1 Kings 8:41-43). Just like the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the Temple was to be in a location that—once completed, anointed, and with the Ark of the Covenant in place—would be filled with the glory of the Lord:

“There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, 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” (1 Kings 8:9-11).

What strikes you as being the most important theme seen in this week’s Torah and Haftarah readings?

The Creator God desires to dwell with the human beings He has created. While Israel was designated to be His chosen people, Israel’s chosenness had a significant purpose to it. The purpose of constructing the Temple was so “all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and revere You” (1 Kings 8:43, NJPS). The Temple was built to be a place for God’s glory to be manifest, and for the fame of the Creator to reach beyond the people of Israel! The Temple constructed in Jerusalem was to be a reminder that God does not want a far-off relationship with His people, but rather He wants a proximate relationship with His people.

Even though God desires intimacy with His people, this does not by any means demean the fact that He is holy and pure. Moses was unable to easily enter into the Tent of Meeting. Similarly, the priests who served God in the Temple were powerless to stand in His presence. These physical realities are stark reminders that He is so holy—that coming into the absolute presence of His glory as unredeemed sinners—is impeded, if not impossible!

So what is needed to enter into His presence? *Is something else required?* If we want to participate in the communion that our Father so desires, what do we need to do?

We do see in our readings this week that God provides the materials for His dwelling places (either the wilderness Tabernacle or Solomon’s Temple) from the physical world, while also supernaturally empowering the individuals with the skills to follow to His precise instructions. Yet, despite the combination of both God’s desire to dwell with His people, and the provision of materials and the skilled workers to accomplish His goals—something still prevents the full communion that He seeks with man. At least, this is what appears to be the case.

Was there something in ancient times obstructing the intimacy? Obviously, there was something, but what was it? After all, Moses’ relationship with the Holy One was unique (cf. Deuteronomy 34:10), and the priests in Solomon’s era appear to be following His instructions rather well. We do know that at some point in past history, after Moses requested to see God’s glory, he was only permitted to see it in passing:

“Then Moses said, ‘I pray You, show me Your glory!’ And He said, ‘I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.’ But He said, ‘You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!’ Then the LORD said, ‘Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand *there* on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen’” (Exodus 33:18-23).

Why is it so difficult to see the full presence of God? It is only because human beings are mortal and corporeal creatures? *Or is it because of the limitations imposed by the presence of sin?*

For some Messianics today this can be a mystery—often because they find their Bible studies focused almost exclusively on the Torah (and sometimes, parts of the Tanakh). Yet the very fact that we are “Messianic” requires us to consider the further perspective of the Apostolic Writings, widening and deepening our understanding of God’s plan of salvation. The promise of the New Covenant—where the Lord will write His Instruction unto the hearts of His people—is inaugurated in their lives via the atoning work of Yeshua the Messiah. This work not only allows

Believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but also gives them an assurance and confidence to approach God's presence, to a much higher level than those who preceded the time of the Messiah. The author of Hebrews attests to this:

"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 'THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,' *He then says*, 'AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE' [Jeremiah 31:33-34]. Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:14-23).

Since God will forget human sin, because of the sacrifice of His Son (Romans 11:27), born again Believers have a grand privilege of being able to enter into the intimacy of the Holy Place and entreat Him with their requests. The original requirement to Moses to stay outside the tent, or the prostrate positioning of the priests unable to stand, has certainly been modified. The ancient examples do show, though, that even if we have a much greater access to the Lord's presence now that Yeshua has come, we still have to approach Him with great reverence and awe.

The need for us to approach God properly is emphasized by the Apostle Paul in his writings to the Corinthians. The people of God are not to be bound to unbelievers, and nor are they to fellowship with lawlessness and darkness. If born again Believers make up the corporate Temple of God today, then they are not to have any fellowship with idols and sinful activities:

"Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide *to us* also. Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Messiah with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE' [Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 20:34, 41]. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,' says the Lord. 'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN [2 Samuel 7:8, 14; Isaiah 43:6; Jeremiah 31:9]; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:13-18).

God's desire is not that we just be His people, but that we be His sons and daughters! The word proclaimed to Moses that God would dwell in His people and walk among them (Exodus 29:45; Leviticus 26:12) is something that Paul said the Corinthians could experience in their lives. The Holy One of Israel would be One with whom redeemed souls could experience great intimacy, like that of a father to his children. This is far more than just an Almighty God being worshipped, revered, and awed. This is a relationship that goes beyond His glory residing in a temporary wilderness Tabernacle, or even a permanent Temple. It is a relationship that is to be experienced every day, regardless of where one resides, as "Messiah is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

These are the things that should motivate us to seek the Lord and His righteousness more and more—knowing that through our desire to commune with Him, our intimacy with Him will be enhanced. While it is awesome to know about the physical details of the Tabernacle and Temple, and what they consisted of—it is far more wonderful to consider the reality that we compose God's Temple today, and that His presence can reside inside of us. **At some point in past time, it is my prayer that you have answered His call, and have allowed His Holy Spirit to take up residence inside of your heart!** What the ancient Tabernacle and Temple depict for us, has now become a reality inside of you as a redeemed person!

Perhaps this week's review of the appearance of the glory of God at the Tabernacle and the Temple, will prompt you to ask for a greater peek of His glory as it resides in your heart? Brothers and sisters, I implore you to ask our Heavenly Father to reveal more of Himself to you. For as you experience more of Him, so should others see you and want more of Him too!

Until the restoration of all things...

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