

# הַפְּטָרָה וַיְחִי

## HAFTARAH FOR VA-Y'HI

1 KINGS 2:1-12

This *haftarah* contains David's last will and testament to Solomon. The dying king instructs his son and heir about the religious and political pursuits he should follow to be successful (1 Kings 2:1-4,5-9). A concluding note states that Solomon's sovereignty was well established (v. 12), even though he had not yet carried out the ruthless acts advised by his father (cf. 2:28-35).

David died in ca. 965 B.C.E. The David portrayed here is both a pious believer in the Law and a shrewd politician who knows what it will take to secure Solomon's throne, which had just been won through intrigue and duplicity (1 Kings 1).

The aged King David speaks to Solomon in the language of religious rhetoric. The pious speech artfully attributed to him is also reflected in the high style of his learned language. This is illustrated, for example, by citations ("as recorded in the Teaching of Moses," 1 Kings 2:3) and by motivation clauses (introduced by *l'maan*, "in order that," vv. 3-4; see Deut. 4:1,5, 5:16). David, a man of the Covenant, fully versed in the language of Torah, urges Solomon to obey its precepts.

The tone and content of the political section of David's directives, by contrast, is less polished and more in tune with realpolitik. David's advice to his son is based on personal considerations, and the language he uses recalls private grudges and other matters that the dying king wants his son to know, taking him into his confidence. The king's tactics are crafty. He simultaneously colludes with Solomon (saying "you know," vv. 5,9), appeals to his son's pride and cleverness ("your wisdom," "for you are . . . wise," vv. 6,9), and lets him know that death in Sheol is the only way to treat dangerous rivals (vv. 6,9). Moreover, knowing that his son will understand the hint contained in his comment that "I swore" that "I

will not put [Shimei] to the sword," David can die in peace knowing that Solomon will attend to unsavory tasks that David has left for him. And this he does, through the agency of Benaiah (2:46). Significantly, the narrator's remark about the security of Solomon's throne in 1 Kings 2:12 recurs in verse 46, just after the murder of Shimei.

### RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE PARASHAH

The *parashah* and the *haftarah* both deal with the approaching death of a leader (Jacob and David) and with a final pronouncement delivered to his son(s) (the 12 sons of Jacob, and Solomon). Both episodes begin alike, with the phrase "When [Jacob's/David's] life was drawing to a close" (*va-yikr'vu y'mei . . . lamut*). The technical term "he instructed" (*va-y'tzav*) also occurs in both instances (Gen. 49:29; 1 Kings 2:1), leading to the final instructions. Jacob requests that he be buried in the family tomb in the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 49:29-32), a request that subsequently is fulfilled (50:12-13).

Joseph's brothers, fearing that he would take revenge because they had sold him into servitude, "sent this message" (*va-y'tzavvu*). "Before his death your father left this instruction (*tzivvah*): So shall you say to Joseph, 'Forgive, I urge you, the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly'" (Gen. 50:16-17). Whether this was true or concocted, Joseph accepts their testimony and assures them of his good intentions (50:19-21).

Jacob's final request of his sons in the *parashah* repeats the more personal account made to Joseph alone (Gen. 47:29). It is here that the full moral force of being an agent for the dead is articulated. After supplicating the son, the father refers to the burial in Canaan as an act of "stead-

fast loyalty" (*hesed v'emet*). More particularly, it is best understood as an act of gratuitous kindness (*hesed shel emet*; Gen. R. 96:5).

The agency of Solomon in fulfilling David's last will is more complicated. For David's requests do not involve what a person never could do for himself (burial), but that which he intentionally delegates. In an effort to give the act of agency moral and legal force, rabbinic tradition

articulated the overall principle that "the agent of a person is as himself" (BT Kid. 41b). But in a further attempt to eliminate the double evasion of responsibility, they further stated that "there is no agent for enacting a sin" (BT Kid. 42b). From this perspective, David is culpable for the deaths of Joab and Shimei. Unlike Joseph, he is not magnanimous, but reaches beyond the grave to strike at his enemies.

**2** When David's life was drawing to a close, he instructed his son Solomon as follows: <sup>2</sup>"I am going the way of all the earth; be strong and show yourself a man. <sup>3</sup>Keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in His ways and following His laws, His commandments, His rules, and His admonitions as recorded in the Teaching of Moses, in order that you may succeed in whatever you undertake and wherever you turn. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD will fulfill the promise that He made concerning me: 'If your descendants are scrupulous in their conduct, and walk before Me faithfully, with all their heart and soul, your line on the throne of Israel shall never end!'

<sup>5</sup>"Further, you know what Joab son of Ze-ruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of Israel's forces, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether: he killed them, shedding blood of war in peacetime, staining the girdle of his loins and the sandals on his feet

**ב** וַיִּקְרָבוּ יְמֵי דָוִד לְמוֹת וַיִּצַו אֶת־שְׁלֹמֹה בְנוֹ לֵאמֹר: <sup>2</sup>אֲנֹכִי הֵלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְחֻזְקָתָ וְהֵייתָ לְאִישׁ: <sup>3</sup>וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכָּיו לְשַׁמֵּר חֻקֹּתָיו מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְעֵדוּתָיו כַּכְּתוּב בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה לְמַעַן תִּשְׁכִּיל אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תִּפְנֶה שָׁם: <sup>4</sup>לְמַעַן יִקִּים יְהוָה אֶת־דְּבָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר עָלַי לֵאמֹר אִם־יִשְׁמְרוּ בְּנֵיךָ אֶת־דַּרְכֶּם לָלֶכֶת לִפְנֵי בְּאֵמַת בְּכָל־לִבְבָם וּבְכָל־נַפְשָׁם לֵאמֹר לֹא־יִפְרֹת לְךָ אִישׁ מֵעַל כִּסֵּא יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>5</sup>וְגַם אֶתְּהָ יָדַעְתָּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לִי יוֹאָב בֶּן־צְרוּיָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְשְׁנֵי־שָׂרֵי צְבָאוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאַבְנֵר בֶּן־נֵר וּלְעַמְשָׂא בֶן־יֵתֵר וַיַּהַרְגֵם וַיִּשְׂם דְּמֵי־מִלְחָמָה בְּשָׁלֵם וַיִּתֵּן דְּמֵי מִלְחָמָה בְּחֻגְרֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר

**1 Kings 2:1. he instructed** The word translated as "he instructed" (*va-y'tzav*) literally means "he commanded." The term is used for final pronouncements. As used here, the verb has a double entendre, combining the force of an exhortation (Deut. 31:23) with the urgency of a final request (Gen. 49:29).

**3-4.** The references to obeying the Torah and commandments interrupt David's practical and political exhortation. In a similar manner, Josh. 1:7-8 interrupt the exhortation of national courage in vv. 6 and 9. Later notions of Torah piety thus transform older injunctions.

**3. Keep the charge of the LORD** The word translated as "charge" (*mishmeret*) is a technical term for observing the Covenant, in the tradition of Deuteronomy. Elsewhere it has the sense of maintaining a watch, especially over priestly objects of sanctity.

**4. your line . . . shall never end** The promise that the royal line will not cease, or be cut off, is cited from the divine promise to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-16. Generational continuity is promised "forever" (v. 16).

with blood of war. <sup>6</sup>So act in accordance with your wisdom, and see that his white hair does not go down to Sheol in peace.

<sup>7</sup>But deal graciously with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, for they befriended me when I fled from your brother Absalom; let them be among those that eat at your table.

<sup>8</sup>"You must also deal with Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim. He insulted me outrageously when I was on my way to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD: 'I will not put you to the sword.' <sup>9</sup>So do not let him go unpunished; for you are a wise man and you will know how to deal with him and send his gray hair down to Sheol in blood."

<sup>10</sup>So David slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the City of David. <sup>11</sup>The length of David's reign over Israel was forty years: he reigned seven years in Hebron, and he reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup>And Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established.

**12. and his rule was firmly established**  
This concluding line of the *haftarah* indicates Solomon's success.

בְּמַתְנֵיוֹ וּבְנַעְלוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּרַגְלָיו: <sup>6</sup>וְעָשִׂיתָ כְּחַכְמָתְךָ וְלֹא-תוֹרֵד שִׁיבְתוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם שְׂאֵל: ס

<sup>7</sup>וְלִבְנֵי בְרַזְלַי הַגִּלְעָדִי תַעֲשֶׂה-חֶסֶד וְהָיָה בְּאֶכְלֵי שְׁלֹחֶךָ כִּי-יִכֹן קָרְבוֹ אֵלַי בְּבִרְחִי מִפְּנֵי אֲבִשָׁלוֹם אַחִיךָ:

<sup>8</sup>וְהִנֵּה עִמָּךְ שְׁמַעִי בֶן-גֵּרָא בֶן-הַיְמִינִי מִבְּחָרִים וְהוּא קָלְלָנִי קָלְלָה נְמוּרָצַת בְּיוֹם לְכַתִּי מַחְנִים וְהוּא-יָרַד לְקָרְאֹתַי הַיַּרְדֵּן וְאָשָׁבַע לוֹ בַיהוָה לֵאמֹר אִם-אֲמִיתָךְ בְּחָרֵב: <sup>9</sup>וְעַתָּה אֲלֹתֶנְקֶהוּ כִּי אִישׁ חָכֵם אַתָּה וְיָדַעְתָּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר תַעֲשֶׂה-לוֹ וְהוֹרַדְתָּ אֶת-שִׁיבְתוֹ בְּדָם שְׂאֵל:

<sup>10</sup>וַיִּשְׁכַּב דָּוִד עִם-אֲבֹתָיו וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּעִיר דָּוִד: פ <sup>11</sup>וְהַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר מָלַךְ דָּוִד עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּחֶבְרוֹן מָלַךְ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים וּבִירוּשָׁלַם מָלַךְ שְׁלֹשִׁים וְשָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים: <sup>12</sup>וּשְׁלֹמֹה יָשָׁב עַל-כִּסֵּא דָּוִד אָבִיו וַתִּכֶן מַלְכוּתוֹ מְאֹד:

... on personal considerations, ... The word ... as a result of ... in the ... of ... which ... the ... of ... especially ... from ... The ... will not ... of ... to David ... is ...

... further you know what ... what he did to the two ... of Israel's forces. Absalom son of ... and Amasa son of ... killed them, ... of war in ... staining the ... of his hair and the sandals on his feet ... The word ... as the ... (literally) ... the ... is used for ... the ... has a double ... combining the force of an ... (Dan 2:23) with the urgency of a ... (Gen 49:29) ... The reference to observing the ... and ... David's ... and political ... in a similar ... 8 ... the ... in ... and ... of ... that ...