

Haftarah Helper 5781: Miketz¹

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The legacy of King David and the rise of his son Solomon opens the Book of Kings. From ensuring Solomon's place on the throne, to his developing into a powerful monarch, the Haftarot for Genesis feature these episodes prominently. Much as Genesis features transitions between generations, the Haftarot focus on the generational transition from David to Solomon. This week's Haftarah is the second of three such Haftarot.²

This week's Haftarah is read only in years when Parashat Miketz does not fall on Chanukah. On average, this occurs once in ten years, but the spacing is sporadic: the last reading was in 2000/5761, but the next will be in 2023/5784.³

I Kings 3:15-4:1

After God grants Solomon wisdom as part of a dream, he is confronted with a real-life moral and legal quandary requiring it. Two new mothers who live together without other people both claim maternity of a single infant. Each claims that the other killed her baby while asleep, exchanged the dead and live infants, and wrongfully possesses the live infant. Solomon declares that the live baby should be cut in half in order to determine the true mother - the one seeking to spare its life. This startling approach to resolving an inscrutable case demonstrated Solomon's wisdom, solidifying his rule.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verse 3:15: Solomon awakes from a dream in which God granted him wisdom, wealth, and honor.

I Kings 3:15	מלכים א ג:ט"ו
Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream. He came to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, offered up burnt offerings, made peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.	וַיִּקַּץ שְׁלֹמֹה וְהִנֵּה חֲלוֹם וַיָּבֹא יְרוּשָׁלַם וַיַּעֲמֵד לְפָנָי אֲרוֹן בְּרִית־אֱדֹקִי וַיַּעַל עֹלוֹת וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁלָמִים וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל־עַבְדָּיו: (פ)

Verses 3:16-19: The first mother presents her case before him...

I Kings 3:17	מלכים א ג:י"ז
One woman said, "Oh, my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I gave birth to a child with her in the house."	וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה הָאֶחָת בִּי אֲדֹנָי אֲנִי וְהָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת יָשְׁבֶת בְּבַיִת אֶחָד וְאֵלֶּךָ עִמָּה בְּבַיִת:

Haftarah Breakdown (cont.)

¹ With emendations, biblical translations are by Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg and other translations are from Sefaria.org.

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² The other Haftarot are for parashiyot Chayei Sarah and Vayechi.

³ <https://www.facebook.com/hebrewcalendarfacts/posts/730903967545084> explains the calendrical intricacies.

Verses 3:20-22: ... and claims that the other woman stole her child. The second mother claims the same.

I Kings 3:20	מלכים א ג:כ
“She [the other woman] arose in the middle of the night, took my son from beside me while your handmaid [I] slept, laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead son in my bosom.”	וַתִּקַּח בְּתוֹךְ הַלַּיְלָה וַתִּקַּח אֶת־בְּנִי מֵאֲצִלִּי וַאֲמַתְךָ יִשְׁנָה וַתִּשְׁכַּבְהוּ בְּחִיקָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵה הַמֵּת הִשְׁכִּיבָה בְּחִיקִי:

Verses 3:23-25: Solomon decrees that the baby be chopped in two.

I Kings 3:25	מלכים א ג:כ"ה
The king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other."	וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ גְּזְרוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַחַי לְשֵׁנַיִם וְתִנוּ אֶת־הַחֲצִי לְאַחַת וְאֶת־הַחֲצִי לְאַחַת:

Verses 3:26-27: ... and the true mother is revealed.

I Kings 3:26	מלכים א ג:כ"ו
The woman whose son was the live one pleaded with the king, for she was overcome with compassion for her son. “Please, my lord,” she cried, “give her the live child; don’t kill it!” The other insisted, “it shall be neither yours nor mine. Cut it in two!”	וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־בְּנֵה הַחַי אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי־נִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמֵיהָ עַל־בְּנֵה וַתֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי תְּנוּ־לָהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַחַי וְהַמֵּת אֶל־תְּמִיתֵהוּ וְזֹאת אִמִּֽרְתָּ גַם־לִי גַם־לְךָ לֹא יִהְיֶה גְזֹרוּ:

Verses 3:28-4:1: Solomon’s wisdom solidifies his authority over the entire kingdom.

I Kings 3:28	מלכים א ג:כ"ח
All Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged. They feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God (was) in him to do judgment.	וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁר שָׁפַט הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּירָאוּ מִפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי רָאוּ כִּי־חִכְמַת אֱלֹקִים בְּקִרְבּוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט: (o)

Parashah Connections

The Parashah and the Haftarah recount the **rise to power of two wise men**, Joseph and Solomon, in their respective **royal households**. Two methods enable each to rule: properly **understanding divinely sent dreams**, and **using that wisdom to act boldly and creatively**.

Other Connections (I)

Rabbi Yosef Caro codifies important **rules of jurisprudence** from this Haftarah.

Shulchan Arukh, Choshen Mishpat 17:7	חושן משפט י"ז:ז
The judge must hear the claims of the litigants and repeat them, for is written (1 Kings 2:23), “The king said, ‘This one says, “This (is) my son that lives, and your son (is) the dead,” and the other says, “Not so, your son (is) the dead, and my son (is) the living”’, and he makes the case clear in his heart [mind], and then decides it.	צריך הדיין לשמוע דברי הבעלי דינים ולשנות אותם שנאמר ויאמר המלך זאת אומרת בני החי וגו' ומצדיק הדין בלבו ואח"כ חותכו:

Other Connections (II)

This Haftarah has been painted by numerous noted artists throughout the ages.



This fresco, by the Renaissance artist Raphael, is housed at the Papal Palace in Vatican City...



...and this etching, by Marc Chagall, is part of his Bible series.