

Haftarah Helper 5781: Shekalim

Zachary Beer (Nachshon Project Fellow, The City College of New York) and
Barry Kornblau (Rabbi, Young Israel of Hollis Hills-Windsor Park, Queens, NY)

On four Shabbatot beginning in Adar, additional Torah readings (the “Four Parashiyot”) are read after the weekly Parashah, reflecting seasonal themes relating to Purim and Passover. Their associated Haftarot also relate to these themes¹. The first of the Four Parashiyot, Shekalim (Ex. 30:11-16), details a required annual payment to support the Temple. The Mishnah in Shekalim rules that the duty to make this payment is announced on Rosh Chodesh Adar, which this year coincides with this Shabbat. Similarly, the Haftarah deals with the Temple’s monetary needs.

2 Kings 11:17-11:20²; 12:1-12:17

The power and meaning of the Haftarah’s simple storyline stem from the dramatic, revolutionary events which precede it.³ God sent the prophet Elisha to anoint a man, Yehu, to overthrow and replace the idolatrous, murderous royal house of Ahab in the Northern Kingdom. During the resulting bloody upheaval, Yehu also put to death evil King Ahaziah of Judah, an ally of Ahab’s house, and many of Ahaziah’s male relatives. In response to Ahaziah’s murder, his evil mother and idolatrous daughter of Ahab, Athaliah, slew all remaining heirs to her son’s Davidic throne and assumed Judah’s royal powers for herself and Ahab’s house.

Amidst Athaliah’s slaughter, Ahaziah’s sister, Jehosheba, saved her brother, newborn Jehoash - the sole surviving heir to the Davidic dynasty. She hid him in the Temple, raising him there with her husband, High Priest Jehoiadah, for six years. When Jehoash was seven years old, Jehoiadah led a dramatic coup in the Temple against Athaliah, had her put to death in the royal palace, and dramatically crowned the young prince as king amidst great rejoicing.

After standing for 150 years since Solomon built it, including decades of neglect and abuse by idolatrous Athaliah, Ahaziah, and others, the Temple lay in disrepair. The Haftarah picks up the story at this point:

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 11:17-18: Jehoiadah leads the people in rededicating themselves to God and eliminating idolatry from Judah, and appoints officers for the Temple.

II Kings 11:17	מלכים ב י"א:י"ז
Jehoiada made the covenant between the Lord, the king, and the people, that they should be the Lord’s people; and also between the king and the people.	וַיַּכְרֵת יְהוֹיָדָע אֶת-הַבַּיִת בֵּין ה' וּבֵין הַמֶּלֶךְ וּבֵין הָעָם לַהֲיֹוֹת לְעָם לְה' וּבֵין הַמֶּלֶךְ וּבֵין הָעָם:

¹ Since the “Four Parshiyot” do not fall out on the same Parashah every year, they have their own unique readings which override the usual Haftarah for that Parashah.

² Ashkenazim omit these verses.

³ The events are described in 2 Kings 9-11:16 and 2 Chronicles 22-23.

Verses 11:19-20: Amidst great celebration, King Jehoash assumes the throne in the royal palace.

II Kings 11:19	מלכים ב י"א:י"ט
[Jehoiadah] took the rulers over hundreds, and the Kari ⁴ , and the runners, and all the people of the land; they brought down the king from the house of the Lord and came by the way of the gate of the runners to the king's house. [Jehoash] sat on the throne of the kings.	וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שָׂרֵי הַמַּאֲוֹת וְאֶת־הַכָּרִי וְאֶת־הַרְצָיִם וְאֵת אֵל־כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיְרִידוּ אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִבַּיִת ה' וַיָּבֹאוּ דֶרֶךְ־שַׁעַר הַרְצָיִם בַּיַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא הַמְּלָכִים:

Verses 12:1-4: An overview of Jehoash's reign of forty years.

II Kings 12:3	מלכים ב י"ב:ג
Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days as Jehoiadah the priest instructed him.	וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוֹאָשׁ הַיֹּשֵׁר בְּעֵינֵי ה' כָּל־יָמָיו אֲשֶׁר הוֹרְהוּ יְהוֹיָדָע הַכֹּהֵן:

Verses 12:5-6: Jehoash commands the priests to collect money from their acquaintances to restore the Temple.

II Kings 12:6	מלכים ב י"ב:ו
Let the priests - every man from his acquaintance - take [money], and repair the breaches of the house, wherever any breach shall be found.	יִקְחוּ לָהֶם הַכֹּהֲנִים אִישׁ מֵאֵת מִכָּרוֹ וְהִים יִחַזְקוּ אֶת־בְּדָק הַבַּיִת לְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּצָא שָׁם בְּדָק: (פ)

Verses 12:7-9: Decades later, the Temple remained unrepaired. Jehoash terminates the priestly collections.

II Kings 12:8	מלכים ב י"ב:ח
King Jehoash called for Jehoiadah the priest, and the priests. He said to them, "Why do you not repair the breaches of the house? Now take no more money from your acquaintances, but give [what you nonetheless receive] to [repair] breaches of the house."	וַיִּקְרָא הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוֹאָשׁ לַיהוֹיָדָע הַכֹּהֵן וְלַכֹּהֲנִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מִדּוּעַ אֵינְכֶם מְחַזְּקִים אֶת־בְּדָק הַבַּיִת וְעַתָּה אֶל־תִּקְחוּ־כֶסֶף מֵאֵת מִכָּרֵיכֶם כִּי־לְבַדֶּק הַבַּיִת תִּתְּנֶהוּ:

Verses 10-11: Jehoiadah collects sufficient money to repair the Temple from its visitors.

II Kings 12:10	מלכים ב י"ב:י
Jehoiadah the priest took a chest, bored a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one enters the Lord's house. The priests who guarded the door put in it all the money brought to the Lord's house.	וַיִּקַּח יְהוֹיָדָע הַכֹּהֵן אֲרוֹן אֶחָד וַיִּקְבַּח חֹר בְּדַלְתּוֹ וַיִּתֵּן אֹתוֹ אֶצְלַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בַּיְמִין [מִיְמִין] בְּבֹא־אִישׁ בַּיִת ה' וַנְּתַנוּ־שָׁמָּה הַכֹּהֲנִים שְׂמֵרֵי הַסֹּף אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּסֶף הַמוֹבָא בַּיִת־ה':

Verses 12:12-17: The money is utilized to repair the Temple

II Kings 12:12	מלכים ב י"ב:י"ב
They gave the money that was counted into the hands to those who did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the Lord. They disbursed it to the carpenters and builders who worked upon the house of the Lord.	וַנְּתַנוּ אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף הַמִּתְּכָן עֲלֵיד [יְדִי] עֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה הַפְּקָדִים [הַמְּפַקְדִים] בַּיִת ה' וַיִּצְיְאֶהוּ לַחֲרָשֵׁי הָעֵץ וְלַבְּנִים הָעֹשִׂים בַּיִת־ה':

With emendations, all translations are from Sefaria.org. To dedicate, comment, or subscribe, email zbeer570@gmail.com.

⁴ For the meaning of "Kari", Da'at Mikra suggests: "messengers", "archers", "strongmen", "mercenaries from Asia Minor", and more.