

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



Produced by THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
Copyright © 2001 by the Rabbinical Assembly

Copyright © 2001 by The Rabbinical Assembly

Hebrew text, based on *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*,

© 1999 by The Jewish Publication Society

English translation © 1985, 1999 by The Jewish Publication Society

First edition. All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, except for brief passages in connection with a critical review, without permission in writing from:

The Rabbinical Assembly

3080 Broadway

New York, NY 10027

Blessings for the Torah and haftarot have been adapted from

Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals, © 2000 by The Rabbinical Assembly.

Maps © by Oxford University Press, supplied by Oxford Cartographers. Used by permission of Oxford University Press.

Illustrations of the tabernacle and its furnishings by Joe Sikora.

Composition by VARDA Graphics, Skokie, Illinois

Design by Adrianne Onderdonk Dudden

Manufactured in the United States of America

09 10 10 9 8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bible. O. T. Pentateuch. Hebrew. 2001.

Etz Hayim: Torah and commentary / senior editor, David L. Lieber; literary editor, Jules Harlow; sponsored by the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

p. cm.

Text of the Pentateuch in Hebrew and English; commentary in English.

Includes the haftarot and commentary on them, p'shat and d'rash commentaries, comments on Conservative halakhic practice, topical essays, and other material.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-10: 0-8276-0712-1 ISBN-13: 978-0-8276-0712-5

1. Bible. O. T. Pentateuch—Commentaries. 2. Haftarat—Commentaries. 3. Bible. O. T. Pentateuch—Theology. 4. Conservative Judaism—Customs and practices. I. Lieber, David L. II. Harlow, Jules. III. United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. IV. Rabbinical Assembly. V. Bible. O. T. Pentateuch. English. Jewish Publication Society. 2001. VI. Title.

BS1222 .L54 2001

222'.1077—dc21

2001029757

הַפְּטָרָה לַמַּחֵר חוֹדֵשׁ

HAFTARAH FOR SHABBAT AND EREV ROSH ḤODESH

1 SAMUEL 20:18–42

(Recite on Shabbat if the next day is Rosh Ḥodesh. However, on Shabbat Ḥanukkah, recite the haftarah for that occasion instead. On the 3rd Shabbat after Tish-ah b'Av, recite the third Haftarah of Consolation instead, which begins on page 1085. With parashat Sh'kalim or parashat ha-Ḥodesh, recite the haftarah for those passages instead.)

This *haftarah* is part of the long cycle of narratives depicting David's rise in national esteem and his corresponding decline in King Saul's favor (ca. 1000 B.C.E.). Saul's jealousy over David's fame as a soldier played a key role, driving the king mad with rage. Earlier, after defeating the Philistines, Saul had returned home with his troops only to hear women singing: "Saul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). The next day, gripped by an "evil spirit," Saul threw a spear at David "thinking to pin [him] to the wall. But David eluded him twice" (18:10–11).

As the Philistine wars continued, "David was more successful than all the other officers of Saul. His reputation soared" (18:30). In reaction, Saul urged his courtiers to kill his perceived rival. David escaped through the intervention of Saul's son Jonathan (19:1–6). Nevertheless, after David led another round of military successes, another "evil spirit" overtook Saul. Once more he "tried to pin David to the wall with his spear" (19:8–10). Again David escaped. Obsessed, Saul sent messengers to guard David's house, with orders to strike him dead in the morning. But again Saul was thwarted, as Michal (his daughter and David's wife) warned David of the plot and hid his escape (19:11–16). Doubly foiled by his own children, Saul himself set out in hot pursuit of David, accompanied by a band of messengers. David fled to Jonathan and, begging him to explain Saul's rage, enlisted Jonathan's help in a plan to test

Saul's true intent. This is the narrative background to the *haftarah*.

The *haftarah* unfolds in three parts: the plan, an event at the royal court, and an event in the field. All elements of the opening part recur in the second and third parts: the absence of David at court during the new moon, the ruse of the arrows in the field, and the covenantal commitment between David and Jonathan.

The story contrasts the established kingship at court with the bond of friendship in the field. Jonathan tries to mediate, because he is both the trusted son of the king and the beloved friend of the hero. His mediation, however, is not symmetrical. For he betrays his father's confidence out of loyalty to David—as King Saul comes to realize during the new moon feast. Jonathan's fate is sealed when he tries to annul Saul's decree that David die. At this point the king takes up his spear against his son.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR

This *haftarah* was chosen to be recited on the *Shabbat* that immediately precedes the New Moon (the first day of the Hebrew month), because this scriptural reading contains the very words *mahar ḥodesh* (Tomorrow will be the new moon) that now designate the day. Moreover, although the Torah designates only the types of sacrificial rites to be performed on the new moon (Num. 10:10, 28:11–15), this *haftarah* indicates that there were also popular gatherings and communal meals on that day. We read that the king sat down to "partake of the meal" (*lehem*, 1 Sam. 20:24), and that David went to his home town of Bethlehem to participate there in the "family feast" (*zevah mishpahah*; v. 29). On the basis of

these references, the custom of having a festive meal on the new moon developed, a practice later codified in the *Shulhan Arukh* (O.H. 419:1). From the *haftarah* we also learn that people in a state of ritual impurity could not participate in this communal meal (v. 26).

A further dimension of *Rosh Hodesh* has been incorporated into the synagogue service. The *Musaf Amidah* for the day opens with the statement, “The beginnings of months did You assign for Your people as a time of atonement throughout the generations.” Thus atonement for sin became linked to the renewal and restoration of the moon. The kabbalists (medieval Jewish mystics) found great spiritual meaning in the moon’s waxing and waning; and by the 16th century, it was customary to observe the day before the new moon as a time for taking stock, fasting, and repentance. That day came to be known as the Minor Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur Katan*).

For the kabbalists, the waning of the moon symbolized the exile of the divine Presence (*Sh’khinah*) and the weakening of the powers of holiness during Israel’s exile. The waxing of the moon stood for the renewal of holiness and divine restoration. A new moon was thus a symbol of redemption and hope. Similarly, in the *haftarah*, the bond between David and Jonathan was emblematic of the renewal of human community through love and devotion. Indeed, for the ancient rabbis, this relationship was paradigmatic of a “wholly disinterested love” (a love with no conditions attached), capable of withstanding adverse circumstances (M Avot 5:16). Fundamental to David and Jonathan’s love and commitment was the divine Presence that unifies them (see 1 Sam. 20:23,42). It was this commitment to a transcendent reality that allowed Jonathan to rise beyond self-interest in his loyalty to David.

20 ¹⁸Jonathan said to him, “Tomorrow will be the new moon; and you will be missed when your seat remains vacant. ¹⁹So the day after tomorrow, go down all the way to the place where you hid the other time, and stay close to the Ezel stone. ²⁰Now I will shoot three arrows to one side of it, as though I were shooting at a mark, ²¹and I will order the boy to go and find the arrows. If I call to the boy, ‘Hey! the arrows are on this side of you,’ be reassured and come, for you are safe and there is no danger—as the LORD lives! ²²But if, instead, I call to the lad, ‘Hey! the arrows are beyond you,’ then leave, for the LORD has sent you away. ²³As for the promise we made to each other, may the LORD be [witness] between you and me forever.”

²⁴David hid in the field. The new moon came, and the king sat down to partake of the meal.

כ ¹⁸וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוֹנָתָן מָחָר חֹדֶשׁ וְנִפְקְדָתָּ כִּי יִפְקֹד מוֹשְׁבֶךָ: ¹⁹וְשִׁלְשֶׁת יָמֵיךָ מֵאֵד וּבֵאתָ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-נִסְתַּרְתָּ שָׁם בְּיוֹם הַמַּעֲשֶׂה וְיִשְׁבֶּתָ אֶצְלֵי הָאֶבֶן הָאֵזֶל: ²⁰וְאֲנִי שְׁלֹשֶׁת הַחֲצִיִּים צִדָּה אֹרֶה לְשִׁלַּח-לִי לְמִטְרָה: ²¹וְהִנֵּה אֲשַׁלַּח אֶת-הַנְּעָר לָךְ מֵצֵא אֶת-הַחֲצִיִּים אִם-אָמַר אֲמַר לְנַעַר הִנֵּה הַחֲצִיִּים אִם מִמֶּנִּי וְהִנֵּה קָחֵנּוּ אִם וּבָאָה כִּי-שָׁלוֹם לָךְ וְאִין דִּבַּר חַי-יְהוָה: ²²וְאִם-כֹּה אֲמַר לְעֶלְמִי הִנֵּה הַחֲצִיִּים מִמֶּנִּי וְהִלָּאָה לָךְ כִּי שִׁלַּחְתָּ יְהוָה: ²³וְהִדְבַּר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֲנִי וְאַתָּה הִנֵּה יְהוָה בֵּינֵינוּ וּבֵינֶךָ עַד-עוֹלָם: ²⁴וַיִּסְתַּר דָּוִד בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיְהִי הַחֹדֶשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל אֶל-הַלֶּחֶם לֶאֱכֹל: ²⁵וַיֵּשֶׁב

1 Samuel 20:19. the other time Literally, “on the day of the incident.” This presumably refers to the time when Jonathan interceded with Saul for David’s life (19:2–4).

Ezel stone A landmark apparently used as a signpost for travelers. See Comment to 1 Sam. 20:41.

²⁵When the king took his usual place on the seat by the wall, Jonathan rose and Abner sat down at Saul's side; but David's place remained vacant. ²⁶That day, however, Saul said nothing. "It's accidental," he thought. "He must be impure and not yet purified." ²⁷But on the day after the new moon, the second day, David's place was vacant again. So Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why didn't the son of Jesse come to the meal yesterday or today?" ²⁸Jonathan answered Saul, "David begged leave of me to go to Bethlehem. ²⁹He said, 'Please let me go, for we are going to have a family feast in our town and my brother has summoned me to it. Do me a favor, let me slip away to see my kinsmen.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."

³⁰Saul flew into a rage against Jonathan. "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!" he shouted. "I know that you side with the son of Jesse—to your shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness! ³¹For as long as the son of Jesse lives on earth, neither you nor your kingship will be secure. Now then, have him brought to me, for he is marked for death." ³²But Jonathan spoke up and said to his father, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" ³³At that, Saul threw his spear at him to strike him down; and Jonathan realized that his father was determined to do away with David. ³⁴Jonathan rose from the table in a rage. He ate no food on the second day of the new moon, because he was grieved about David, and because his father had humiliated him.

³⁵In the morning, Jonathan went out into the open for the meeting with David, accompanied

הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל-מוֹשְׁבוֹ כַּפֶּעַם | בַּפֶּעַם אֶל-
מוֹשֵׁב הַקִּיר וַיִּקָּם יְהוֹנָתָן וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְנֵר
מִצַּד שָׁאוּל וַיִּפְקֹד מְקוֹם דָּוִד: ²⁶ וְלֹא-
דָבַר שָׁאוּל מֵאוֹמֶה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כִּי אָמַר
מִקְרָה הוּא בְלִתי טְהוֹר הוּא כִּי-לֹא
טְהוֹר: ²⁷ וַיְהִי מִמַּחֲרַת הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי
וַיִּפְקֹד מְקוֹם דָּוִד ²⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל אֶל-
יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנוֹ מִדָּוִד לֹא-בָא בְּנִי-יְשִׁי גַם-
תָּמוּל גַּם-הַיּוֹם אֶל-הַלְחָם: ²⁸ וַיַּעַן
יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת-שָׁאוּל נִשְׂאֵל נִשְׂאֵל דָּוִד
מֵעַמְדֵי עַד-בַּיִת לַחֶם: ²⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחְנִי
נָא כִּי זָבַח מִשְׁפָּחָה לָנוּ בְעִיר וְהוּא
צֹוֹה-לִי אָחִי וְעַתָּה אִם-מִצָּאתִי חֵן
בְּעֵינֶיךָ אִמְלֹטָהּ נָא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת-אָחִי
עַל-כֵּן לֹא-בָא אֶל-שְׁלַחַן הַמֶּלֶךְ: ³⁰
וַיַּחֲרֵאֵף שָׁאוּל בַּיהוֹנָתָן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
בְּנֵי-נִעוֹת הַמַּרְדּוֹת הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-בָחַר
אֶתָּה לְבִן-יְשִׁי לְבִשְׁתֶּךָ וּלְבִשְׁתַּת עֲרוֹת
אִמֶּךָ: ³¹ כִּי כָל-הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר בְּנִי-יְשִׁי חָי
עַל-הָאָדָמָה לֹא תִכּוֹן אֶתָּה וּמְלִכּוּתְךָ
וְעַתָּה שְׁלַח וְקַח אֹתוֹ אֵלָי כִּי בְּנֵי-מוֹת
הוּא: ³² וַיַּעַן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת-שָׁאוּל
אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לָמָּה יוֹמַת מֶה עָשָׂה:
³³ וַיִּטֵּל שָׁאוּל אֶת-הַחֲנִית עָלָיו לְהַפְתּוֹ
וַיִּדַע יְהוֹנָתָן כִּי-כָלָה הִיא מֵעַם אָבִיו
לְהַמִּית אֶת-דָּוִד: ³⁴ וַיִּקָּם יְהוֹנָתָן
מֵעַם הַשְּׁלַחַן בְּחַר־יָאֵף וְלֹא-אָכַל בַּיּוֹם-
הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי לַחֶם כִּי נִעְצַב אֶל-דָּוִד כִּי
הִכְלָמוּ אָבִיו: ³⁵
³⁵ וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַיֵּצֵא יְהוֹנָתָן הַשָּׂדֶה לְמוֹעֵד

26. It's accidental Hebrew: *mikreh hu*. The next sentence, "He must be impure and not yet purified," suggests that *mikreh* (literally, "accident") is here used in the technical sense of an "accidental" seminal emission, which puts one in a state of ritual impurity (see Deut. 23:11). This is also Rashi's understanding (see BT Pes. 3a).

30. Saul's harsh criticism of Jonathan, and the subsequent gesture of aggression against him, served as the basis for Rabbinic and medieval discussions about the limits of reproof. According to ancient traditions preserved in the Talmud (BT Ar. 16b), the Sages variously placed the limit at cursing, rebuking, shouting, or smiting.

by a young boy.³⁶ He said to the boy, “Run ahead and find the arrows that I shoot.” And as the boy ran, he shot the arrows past him.³⁷ When the boy came to the place where the arrows shot by Jonathan had fallen, Jonathan called out to the boy, “Hey, the arrows are beyond you!”³⁸ And Jonathan called after the boy, “Quick, hurry up. Don’t stop!” So Jonathan’s boy gathered the arrows and came back to his master.—³⁹ The boy suspected nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the arrangement.—⁴⁰ Jonathan handed the gear to his boy and told him, “Take these back to the town.”⁴¹ When the boy got there, David emerged from his concealment at the Negeb. He flung himself face down on the ground and bowed low three times. They kissed each other and wept together; David wept the longer.

⁴² Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace! For we two have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD: ‘May the LORD be [witness] between you and me, and between your offspring and mine, forever!’”

41. emerged from his concealment at the Negeb This rendition is interpretative; literally, “rose up from beside the Negeb.” Possibly, the

דָּוִד וַיֵּצֵא קֶטֶן עִמּוֹ: ³⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר לַנֶּעָר רֹץ
מֵצֵא נָא אֶת־הַחֲצִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מוֹרֵה
הַנֶּעָר רֹץ וְהוֹאֲיָרָה הַחֲצִי לְהַעֲבֹרוֹ:
³⁷ וַיָּבֵא הַנֶּעָר עַד־מְקוֹם הַחֲצִי אֲשֶׁר יָרָה
יְהוֹנָתָן וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹנָתָן אַחֲרֵי הַנֶּעָר וַיֹּאמֶר
הֲלוֹא הַחֲצִי מִמֶּנִּי וְהִלָּאֵה: ³⁸ וַיִּקְרָא
יְהוֹנָתָן אַחֲרֵי הַנֶּעָר מִהֲרָה חוּשָׁה אֶל־
תַּעֲמֹד וַיִּלְקֹט נֶעָר יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־הַחֲצִי
הַחֲצִים וַיָּבֵא אֶל־אֲדֹנָיו: ³⁹ וְהַנֶּעָר לֹא־
יָדַע מֵאוֹמָה אֲף יְהוֹנָתָן וְדָוִד יָדְעוּ אֶת־
הַדָּבָר: ⁴⁰ וַיִּתֵּן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־כִּלָּיו אֶל־
הַנֶּעָר אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לָךְ הֵבִיא הָעִיר:
⁴¹ הַנֶּעָר בָּא וְדָוִד קָם מֵאֶצֶל הַנֶּגֶב וַיִּפֹּל
לְאָפָיו אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים
וַיִּשְׁקּוּ | אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ אִישׁ
אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ עַד־דָּוִד הִגְדִּיל:
⁴² וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹנָתָן לְדָוִד לָךְ לְשָׁלוֹם אֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁבַּעְנוּ שְׁנֵינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה לֵאמֹר
יְהוָה יִהְיֶה | בֵּינִי וּבֵינָךְ וּבֵין זֵרְעֵי וּבֵין
זֵרְעֶךָ עַד־עוֹלָם: פ

phrase is best understood as “arose from his place of concealment near the Ezel stone in the Negeb” (cf. v. 19).