

The Message of Huram, Hiram, Hirom and Chanukah

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Zichron Dov Yeshiva University

Torah Mitzion Beit Midrash of Toronto

In presenting the seventh chapter of Melachim I as our haftorah for the second Shabbat Chanukah, the sages⁴⁴ introduce us to a story of three men with near-identical names, as well as a moral lesson of broad sweep and penetrating depth.

Huram, Hiram and Hirom

And Hiram, King of Tyre, wrote to Solomon: "Because God loves His nation, He made you king upon them." And Hiram said: "Blessed be HaShem, God of Israel, who created the heavens and the earth and gave King David a wise son who possessed intellect and understanding, who would build a house for God and a house for his reign. I have now sent you a knowledgeable, understanding man, my master craftsman⁴⁵ Hiram. He is the son of a woman from Dan and his father is a man of Tyre; he knows how to work in gold, silver, brass, iron, stone, wood, purple wool, blue wool, linen and crimson, and to engrave any engraving and to design any design which would be given to him, along with your wise men and the wise men of David your father."

Divrei haYamim II 2:10-13

(י) ויאמר חורם מלך צר בכתב וישלח אל שלמה באהבת ה' את עמו נתנך עליהם מלך: (יא) ויאמר חורם ברוך ה' אלקי ישראל אשר עשה את השמים ואת הארץ אשר נתן לדוד המלך בן חכם יודע שכל ובינה אשר יבנה בית לה' ובית למלכותו: (יב) ועתה שלחתי איש חכם יודע בינה לחורם אבי: (יג) בן אשה מן בנות דן ואביו איש צרי יודע לעשות בזהב ובכסף בנחשת בברזל באבנים ובעצים בארגמן בתכלת ובבזך ובכרמיל ולפתח כל פתוח ולחשב כל מחשבת אשר ינתן לו עם חכמיו וחכמי אדני דויד אביו:
דברי הימים ב ב:י-יג

⁴⁴ Megilah 31a

⁴⁵ Rashi, among others, renders this as "my father's craftsman."

So far, then, King Hiram⁴⁶ of Tyre has sent King Shlomo a brilliant craftsman who shares the name Hiram. As the Malbim notes, this occurred at the start of the construction of the Beit haMikdash.

Melachim I mentions another, similarly-named craftsman:

And King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a brassworker. He was filled with knowledge and understanding and intelligence, to perform all of the tasks involving brass. He came to King Solomon and performed all of his tasks.

Melachim I 7:13-14

וישלח המלך שלמה ויקח את חירם
מצר: בן אשה אלמנה הוא ממטה נפתלי
ואביו איש צרי חרש נחשת וימלא את
החכמה ואת התבונה ואת הדעת לעשות
כל מלאכה בנחשת ויבוא אל המלך
שלמה ויעש את כל מלאכתו:
מלכים א ז:יג-יד

This Hiram is also from Tyre, but there are marked differences between this craftsman and the previous craftsman sent by King Hiram:

- The former craftsman worked in a range of materials; this one works only in brass;
- The former craftsman was sent at the start of the construction, while this one arrives at the end;
- The former craftsman is described as the son of a woman from Dan; the latter craftsman's mother is from Naftali.

This second craftsman is also mentioned in the opening sentence of the Ashkenazi haftarah for the second Shabbat Chanukah, albeit with the altered name of Hirom:⁴⁷

And Hirom formed the sinks, shovels and basins, and Hiram completed all the tasks he had performed for King Solomon in the house of God.

Melachim I 7:40

ויעש חירום את הכירות ואת היעים ואת
המזרקות ויכל חירם לעשות את כל המלאכה
אשר עשה למלך שלמה בית ה':
מלכים א ז:מ

Why were two craftsmen, Hiram and Hiram/Hirom, involved in building the Beit haMikdash? Malbim explains that they were actually father and son:

It appears to me that when Divrei haYamim says that King Hiram sent a written message to King Solomon, "Now I have sent you," that referred to the father of this Hiram, and his name was also Hiram.⁴⁸ He was sent from the King of Tyre at the start of construction... And he died after seven years, and Solomon sent for his son. Regarding this it says, "And Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre," for the first came at the order

ולי נראה שמה שכתוב בדברי הימים
ששלח מלך חירם בכתב אל שלמה
"ועתה שלחתי לך..." זה היה אביו של
חירם זה, והיה שמו גם כן חירם, והוא
נשלח מאת מלך צור בתחלת הבנין...
ואחר שבע שנים מת, ושלח שלמה אחר
בנו, ועל זה אמר, "וישלח שלמה ויקח
את חירם מצור," כי הראשון בא אליו

⁴⁶ Note that the king of Tyre's name is sometimes presented as חירם, Hiram. See, for example, Melachim I 5:15.

⁴⁷ The Artscroll Stone Chumash (pg. 1212) errs in this regard, commenting on the haftarah, "Much of the *Haftarah* describes the Temple vessels that were made by King Hiram of Tyre, a friend and collaborator of King Solomon."

⁴⁸ Malbim ignores the Hiram/Hirom/Hiram variations throughout.

of the King of Tyre and the second came because Solomon had sent for him. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali, and she was a widow because her husband, Hiram, had died.

Malbim to Melachim I 7:14

בפקודת מלך צור והשני בא על שם
ששלח שלמה אחריו, והוא היה בן אשה
אלמנה ממטה נפתלי, והיתה אלמנה כי
מת חירם בעלה.
מלבי"ם מלאכים א ז:יד

In sum, then, King Hiram/Hiram sent a craftsman named Hiram, who was succeeded by his son Hiram/Hirom, to help build the Beit haMikdash.

The lessons of Hiram's fascinating lineage

This story is about more than an odd interplay of names, though; both Melachim and Divrei haYamim take pains to present us with the lineage of both craftsmen - the son of a woman from Dan and a father from Tyre, and the son of a woman from Naftali and a father from Tyre. Why is this information germane?

Rabbi Yochanan offered one answer:

How do we know that one should not diverge from his craft, and from the craft of his fathers? As it is written, "And King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a brassworker." We are taught, "His mother was from the family of Dan," and it is written, "Ahaliav, son of Achisamach from the tribe of Dan."

Erchin 16b

מנין שלא ישנה אדם מאומנותו
ומאומנות אבותיו? שנאמר: וישלח
המלך שלמה ויקח את חירם מצר בן
אשה אלמנה הוא ממטה נפתלי ואביו
איש צרי חרש נחושת, ואמר מר:
אימיה מבית דן, וכתוב: אהליאב בן
אחיסמך למטה דן.
ערכין טז:

In other words: This craftsman is a matrilineal descendant of Ahaliav, who was also a craftsman. The prophet stresses this lineage in order to teach us to continue the lines of our family businesses.

Another midrashic approach, though, offers deeper moral guidance:

Great and small are equal before God. Betzalel was from Yehudah and Ahaliav was from Dan, and he was paired with him. R' Chanina said: Great and small are equal... The Mishkan was created by these two tribes. So was the Beit haMikdash – Solomon from Yehudah, with Chiram, "the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali."

Sh'mot Rabbah 40:4

הגדול והקטן שוין לפני המקום, בצלאל משל
יהודה ואהליאב מן דן והוא מזדווג לו, אמר ר'
חנינא הגדול והקטן שוים... המשכן בשני
שבטים אלו נעשה, וכן המקדש, שלמה
מיהודה וחירם (מלכים א ז) בן אשה אלמנה
ממטה נפתלי
שמות רבה מ:ד

Betzalel and Ahaliav, the team responsible for construction of the original Mishkan, were the products of opposite families. Betzalel descended from the royal clan of Yehudah, who was a son of Leah. Ahaliav emerged from the tribe that travelled last, Dan, who was a son of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant. The two men could not have hailed from more varied backgrounds, but together

they built the first building on earth where God would be manifest and the Jewish people could gather in worship.

Shlomo and the two Hiram, as the midrash notes, carried the same theme into the first Beit haMikdash. Shlomo, the king from Yehudah, paired first with a descendant of Bilhah's son Naftali and then a descendant of Bilhah's other son Dan to assemble the first permanent home of HaShem. Indeed, Hiram of Dan and Betzalel of Yehudah are both described as being Divinely invested with חכמה and תבונה, knowledge and wisdom; these traits can exist in anyone, regardless of family history.

Abarbanel makes this point even stronger in his explanation of Hiram's lineage. Regarding both Hiram the elder and Hiram the younger, the prophet notes that their fathers were "men of Tyre." Noting that Tyre might simply refer to a geographic origin, Abarbanel then adds that Hiram might actually have been a product of intermarriage:

It is possible to say that he was Tyrean from birth, as the text suggests, and his wife was Jewish, and she married him for some reason – because she had been taken captive, or for some other reason.

Abarbanel Melachim I 7:14

ואפשר לומר שהוא היה צורי ממולדתו, כמו שהעיר הכתוב, ואשתו היתה יהודית ונשאה לו בסבה מן הסבות, אם מפני שביה שנשבית שמה או בסבה אחרת
אברבנל מלאכים א ז:יד

This possibility underscores the message of the midrash above, that a Jew is Jew, regardless of his background, and that any of us can grow to greatness.

It is natural for human beings to assume that spiritual character is an inherited trait and that certain lines are more gifted than others, but the description of Hiram's lineage teaches us that our natural inclination is incorrect. No Jew should ever say, "I am predisposed to spiritual weakness," or, "My ancestors handicapped me." Certainly, all of us are gifted with certain basic talents – but anyone who is willing to invest the effort is given the opportunity to develop those talents to the fullest.

Hiram's message for Chanukah

Rav Mordechai Elon adds that this message may have special relevance for Chanukah:⁴⁹

Our Chanukah Torah reading recounts the gifts brought by each nasi (tribal prince) at the end of the Mishkan's dedication. Despite the fact that each gift's elements were identical, the Torah repeats every detail of each gift as if it were unique, emphasizing the importance of each individual. Then, at the end, the Torah sums up the gifts collectively and demonstrates that we are all as one before HaShem.

Rav Elon points out that the first nasi to bring a gift is Nachshon ben Aminadav, leader of Yehudah, and the last nasi to bring a gift is Achira ben Einan, leader of Naftali. With this we are

⁴⁹ www.elon.org/shiur_hebrew_doc/vayigash64.doc

taught, yet again, that the entire nation exists on the same plane. Each leader's gift for the mishkan is significant, but each also functions as an equal part of the greater unity.

The union of Chanukah's haftarot

This message is also critical as we look toward the building of a third Beit haMikdash, for we are taught that our national unity is a prerequisite for the arrival of Mashiach.⁵⁰ Further, this theme unites the two haftarot of Chanukah.

On the face of it, the two haftarot of Chanukah seem to be read out of order; the haftarah for the first Shabbat of Chanukah is Zechariah's foretelling of the **second** Beit haMikdash, and the haftarah for the second Shabbat of Chanukah describes Shlomo's construction of the **first** Beit haMikdash. Why do we read these messages in reverse chronological order?

Tosafot Yom Tov⁵¹ cites the Ran to suggest that Zechariah's vision actually relates to a future time of Mashiach, and so it is more beloved to us than a description of the first Beit haMikdash.⁵²

Certainly, Zechariah's message is more explicitly linked to a future time of mashiach, but, as noted above, Hiram's message is also important for our eschatological future. On the day when we will truly stand together, when we look not at tribe and lineage but at the knowledge and understanding and talent of the individual, then we will merit a final חנוכת הבית for the בנין עדי עד, the eternal Beit haMikdash.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Yechezkel 37, the haftarah for Parshat Vayyigash

⁵¹ Tosafot Yom Tov to Megilah 3:4

⁵² The Kolbo (#20) answers that precedence is determined by relevance for Chanukah; Zechariah's vision relates to the second Beit haMikdash, during which time the story and miracle of Chanukah took place.

SAVE THE DATE

SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2010 • 21 ADAR 5770

Yeshiva University • Wilf Campus • 2540 Amsterdam Avenue • New York,

ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS, WE CELEBRATE THOSE WHO
HAVE ACHIEVED RABBINIC ORDINATION—THE FUTURE
LEADERSHIP OF THE ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY



חג הסמיכה תש"ע

Chag HaSemikhah



ישיבת רבנו יצחק אלחנן

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

An Affiliate of Yeshiva University

YUTorah.org

A Project of Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future

- Daily Shiur
- Daf Yomi
- Parshat HaShavua
- Halacha
- History
- Machshava
- and much more!

Over 30,000 shiurim and articles and growing every day. All materials available for download completely free. Subscribe to a podcast or e-mail subscription of your favorite speaker or series. There's something for everyone on the largest web site for Jewish learning online.



IT TAKES ETHICS, RELIGION, PHYSIOLOGY,
BIOCHEMISTRY, AND EVEN SOME MUSIC,
TO MAKE A WELL-ROUNDED DOCTOR.

**Mazel Tov from YU to our future doctors
and graduates in every field.**

To learn more about Yeshiva University's many majors and programs, visit www.yu.edu



Yeshiva University
BRING WISDOM TO LIFE™