



Va-yiggash **Ezekiel 37:15-28** **December 27, 2014 / 5 Tevet 5775**

Terms: Zadokite priest

Zadok was the high priest during the life of King David and Solomon (2 Sam. 20:25) (1 Kings 4:4) (1 Kings 4:2). During the rebellion of Absalom, Zadok gained great prominence. He and the Levites wished to accompany the fleeing David; but the King begged them to remain at Jerusalem, where they could do him better service (II Sam. xv. 24-29;). Zadok and his contemporary, Abiathar, acted as high priests (1 Chr. 15:11; 2 Sam. 15:24-29, 35, 36); but when Adonijah, another of David's sons, rebelled against David and sought to secure the throne, Abiathar changed allegiances and supported him. Zadok remained faithful to David and ultimately became high priest. (1 Kings 2:27, 35; 1 Chr. 29:22). Zadok's descendants retained the high priesthood until the fall of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel, son of Buzi, was a Zadokite priest who was deported to Babylon along with eight thousand other exiles in the year 593 B.C.E., prior to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. He prophesied between 593-588 B.C.E. He settled in Tel Abib (Mount of the Flood), a city located on the river Chebar southeast of Babylon where he received his call to prophecy. It is interesting to note that Ezekiel was living in Babylon when he learned of the Temple's destruction. It is also interesting to note that the exile preceded the Temple's destruction.

Ezekiel's prophecies can be divided into two sections.

- Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, his prophecies were directed against the Judeans who remained in the homeland.
- Immediately following its destruction, his prophecies changed to those offering spiritual consolation, national reunification and restoration of the religion of Israel. The Haftarah for Va-yiggash was written after he had learned of the Temple's destruction.

Ezekiel's ancestors achieved prominence when Israel was a unified, undivided nation. His ancestors also witnessed the division of Israel into two kingdoms. Ezekiel lived during the time when what remained of his nation was a remnant of what it once had been. It is reasonable to think that his message would be one that fostered a desire to return to the homeland and for his broken people to be reunited. And so he speaks to us.

“And you O mortal take a stick and write on it”

“Of Judah and the Israelites associated with him; and take another stick and write on it,”

“Of Joseph-the stick of Ephraim-and all of the house of Israel associated with him” and bring them together so they become one stick”

It also makes sense that a priest would feel that restoration was dependent upon a national cleansing and purification. In order for return, redemption, and unification to occur, the people needed to turn to God, follow his rules, obey his laws, and cast off the forms of worship they had absorbed in exile.

Just as in the Torah Judah assumes the mantle of family leadership among his brothers and negotiates for the redemption of Benjamin. Just as Joseph's family is reunited in Egypt and shielded from a long and difficult famine; so too will our people be reunited in Israel as one stick, one people and God will once again make a covenant with them for all time.

Ezekiel's actions after the exile resonated with me and made me think of Herzl and Gandhi, and others who heard a voice, had a vision of what could occur and would not be silenced.

This week's Haftarah commentary is a reprint of one that was originally written for the Unraveller for December 26, 2009 by Rabbi Charles Simon, Executive Director of the FJMC and author of "Understanding the Haftarah: An Everyperson's Guide" and "The Non-Jewish Spouse: Strategies for Clergy and Lay Leadership".