



## Haftarah for Parshat Va-yehi 1 Kings 2:1-12 December 26, 2015 / 14th of Tevet

The books of Chronicles, the last edition to our Bible were written and organized much later than the books of Kings and they tell a different story about Solomon and his rise to kingship. The story in Chronicles describes the transition from David to Solomon as a divine imperative that takes place without the intrigue that is found in this week's haftarah. In Chronicles David simply gathers the people and announces that God has instructed him to appoint Solomon and that Solomon was going to construct the Temple, which he immediately begins to do. It's surprising that two texts can have such different points of view.

Our haftarah tells a different story. Chapter 1 in the first book of Kings explains that David is old and feeble and needs a young girl to keep him warm and following that immediately transitions into a story of the political manipulators each vying to place either Adonijah or his younger half-brother Solomon on the throne. It was Joab (military advisor) and Abiathar (the priest) supporting Adonijah and Bath Sheba, Zadok (the priest) and Nathan, (the prophet) promoting Solomon. The maneuvering was intense and as we know, Solomon, the second son of David and Bath Sheba was the victor. Within this context the advice that David bequeaths to Solomon is revealed.

His advice, as we read it, suggests two messages. The first one, most likely the older of the two is the advice one learns as he ages. David, instructs Solomon a general leaving his position to his successor.

Be strong and show yourself to be a man which parallels Moses's instructions to Joshua.

It continues as David reveals his past history and attempt to instruct Solomon how to view and deal with his potential enemies.

The second message is a pietistic one which is most probably a textual overlay used to re-inforce David's character.

Keep the charge of the Lord, walk in his ways . . . and the Lord will fulfill the promise that He made to me.

This haftarah provides us with a sophisticated message. On one hand we are advised that life is complicated, that we must always be cognizant of the forces, the people around us, with whom

we interact, and if we are in a decision making position not to be naïve. At the same time, the haftarah reminds us that there is always a proper way to act.

It might be possible that the Haftarah's authors selected this reading for reasons beyond the obvious Torah parallel. Perhaps they understood David, not as the ideal moral leader that the tradition attempts to convey, but as the person he actually was? If that was the case then by adding the pietistic dimension that is in the text readers could be challenged not to behave like David but to take the high road instead.

*This week's Haftarah commentary was written for the Unraveller by Rabbi Charles Simon, Executive Director of the FJMC and author of "Biblical Leadership After Moses," "Understanding the Haftarah. An Everyperson's Guide" and "The Non-Jewish Spouse: Strategies for Clergy and Lay Leadership."*