

AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps
Torah Portion – Shmini

Warfare And Worship

וַיְהִי כִּי-יָשַׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּבֵיתוֹ וַיִּהְיֶה הַנִּיחָלוֹ מִסָּבִיב מִכָּל-אֹיְבָיו: בַּיּוֹמָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-נָתָן הַנָּבִיא
רָאָה וְנָא אֲנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּבֵית אֲרָזִים וְאֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים יֹשֵׁב בְּתוֹךְ הִרְיָעָה: גַּוְיָאָמַר נָתָן אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
כָּל אֲשֶׁר בִּלְבָבְךָ לַךְ עָשָׂה כִּי יִהְיֶה עִמָּךְ: דַּוִּיָּהּ בְּלִילָהּ הַהוּא וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל-נָתָן לֵאמֹר:
הֲלֹךְ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל-עַבְדִּי אֶל-דָּוִד כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הָאֲתָה תִּבְנֶה-לִּי בַּיִת לְשֹׁבְתִי:

When the king (David) was settled in his palace and God had granted him safety from all the enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan: "Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God abides in a tent!" Nathan said to the king, "Do whatever you have in mind, for God is with you." But that same night, the word of God came to Nathan, "Go and say to my servant David: Thus says God: Are you the one to build a house for me to dwell in?" [II Samuel 7:1-5]

וַיָּקָם דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל-רַגְלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַעוּנִי אַחֵי וְעַמִּי אֲנִי עִם-לִבִּי לְבָנוֹת בַּיִת מְנוּחָה לְאֲרוֹן
בְּרִית-יְהוָה וְלִהְדֹם רַגְלֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהַכִּינוֹתִי לְבָנוֹת: גַּוְיָאָמַר לִי לֹא-תִבְנֶה בַּיִת לְשֹׁמְרִי
כִּי אִישׁ מִלְחָמוֹת אַתָּה וְדָמִים שָׁפַכְתָּ:

King David rose to his feet and said, "Hear me, my brothers, my people! I wanted to build a resting place for the ark of the covenant of God, for the footstool of our God, and I laid aside building materials for it. But God said to me, "You shall not build a house for My name, since you are a warrior and have shed blood." [I Chronicles 28:2-3]

COMMENTARY: This week's haftarah describes King David's desire to build a permanent home for God's presence. After the prophet Nathan approves the plan, God rejects it. No explanation is given in the haftarah for why David is told that he may not build the Temple.

A later book of the Bible, I Chronicles, fills in the missing information. According to that book, David was forbidden to build the Temple because he had killed so many people in wars.

QUESTIONS: If David's military career was the reason that God did not want him to be the one responsible for building the temple, why do you think that the haftarah leaves that information out? Why does the book of Chronicles fill it in?

Are there other reasons you can think of that God might not have wanted King David to be the one who built the temple?

After Nathan told him to proceed, God stopped David's plan to build the temple. Why was the prophet Nathan so out of synch with God's desire?