

HAFTARAH



Working Behind the Scenes Bex Stern Rosenblat

Our haftarah expands on this week's parasha, limiting the priestly work in the *mikdash* to a very specific subset of the priests, namely, the descendants of Zadok. We read about Zadok as a contemporary of King David, who was ever loyal to King David. When King David chose to flee Jerusalem in order to escape his rebelling son, Absalom, Zadok turns to flee with him, taking the ark of the covenant with him to accompany David. David will not let Zadok or the ark come, but Zadok's heart is clearly in the right place. Later, as David's days as ruler draw to a close and his sons once again vie for power, Zadok chooses the winning side again. He supports Solomon against Adonijah. When Solomon becomes king, Zadok is given the position of high priest.

Yet after this point, we do not hear about Zadok himself again. Zadok is conspicuously absent in the building and dedication of the First Temple. Solomon, the King whom Zadok anointed, is the one who builds and dedicates the Temple. And yet Zadok does not seem to be there at all. We read in 1 Kings 8 about the pains taken to move the ark of the covenant safely into its new home in the Temple. We cannot read it without recalling Zadok's handling of it under King David. Yet here, King Solomon assembles the elders, the heads of the tribes for the honor of carrying the ark. The priests then take up their role in putting the ark into the newly constructed Temple. But once again, there is no mention made of Zadok, no mention made of the high priest. Zadok, who had already proved his mettle as someone who could carry the powerful and dangerous ark, is not tapped for the task this time. He may not even be present. In the very moment that seems like it should be the climax of his career as high priest, following in the footsteps of Aaron in the dedication of the *mishkan*, Zadok is absent. We hear, instead, Solomon's voice raised up in praise to God.

Why did Zadok disappear at what should have been his finest hour and why do his descendants reappear hundreds of years later in our haftarah, after the destruction of the First Temple, as Ezekiel looks forward to the construction of the next? Why does our haftarah narrow the focus from all priests to all descendants of Zadok? Perhaps, Zadok and his descendants did play a specialized role. Perhaps, these sons of righteousness were the interim heads of school, the specialists who appear to get the job done in the moments of transition. Infinitely reliable, they pick up the slack when no one else can even hold the rope. But when the time for thank you speeches and assigning credit arrives, they bow out. In this way, they mirror both Moses of our parasha and Ezekiel of our haftarah. They get the job done and then they pass on the reins, never seeking the limelight.