

Lesson: Isaiah 60 (Haftara for Ki Tavo) – Introduction to the chapter

Lesson Goals:

- a. To create a framework for the prophetic passage in Isaiah 60, which deals with Divine Rebuilding of the Temple, by introducing the historical difficulties encountered in Building the Temple in the “Return to Zion” period
- b. To appreciate the book of Ezra as a historical source, and to recognize its repeated comparisons to the period of the First Temple
- c. To recognize the complexity of Temple Building as a national endeavour, both in terms of divine sanction and in terms of political/economic issues.
- d. To appreciate the concept of “God dwelling in the Sanctuary” as reflected in the use of the term “Kevod Hashem” in Tanakh.

Frontal Teaching: The Problem of Rebuilding the Temple

Like previous units in Isaiah 40-66, this unit also addresses one of the unfulfilled expectations. More specifically, it deals with the problem of rebuilding the temple. Although the initial authorization of Cyrus was to rebuild the temple, and although the temple-building was a central part of the expectations of return that Ezekiel delivered in Babylonia, it proved very difficult to fulfil this project in the absence of a government which would dedicate large resources to this.

Frontal Teaching: Ezra chapter 3.

In brighter classes (or as an extension for brighter students), I recommend teaching the whole chapter, and focusing on the initial difficulties in temple-building which force the returnees to make do with the building of an altar (verses 1-6), and then beginning payment for the temple itself (verse 7). Students should understand (using verse 7) that it was impossible to build the full building immediately, and that it took time to gather and pay the money needed for building materials.

In all classes, I suggest reading together verses 1-3, and asking students why the whole temple was not built – students should realize that besides the financial difficulties, the fear of opposition which the returnees encountered in building the altar made it very challenging to build the Temple.

Worksheet: Ezra chapter 3.

Reviewing Worksheet:

After students have unpacked verses 8-12, review two central points:

- a. Questions 1-5 on the worksheet, verses 8-11 (slide 2). Review only questions 3 and 5, highlighting the “hallel” on the founding or establishment of the temple. Note that the Jews do not wait until the completion of the temple: they realize that they may not get to complete the temple and are grateful for the opportunity to begin.
- b. Question 6, verse 12 (slide 3). Students should realize that the start of the temple elicited two opposing reactions: Crying out of comparison to the lost glories of the first temple; rejoicing at the start of the building.

Then, using slide 4 and a smartboard or whiteboard, ask students to brainstorm as to why it was so difficult to build the second temple. Students should raise the following points:

- Lack of money – encourage students to compare this to Bayit Rishon, in which Shlomo could demand money from the kingdom as a whole to pay for the building. In contrast, the small community of returnees has limited resources.
- Political opposition – encourage students to think about the contrast to Bait Rishon in which Israel were completely independent.

Frontal Teaching: Comparison to the First Temple : Kevod Hashem, Fire, and Cloud

Then, encourage students to think about other issues in the First Temple that might be absent in Bait Sheni. If no-one brings up the idea of “shechina” or “aron,” then ask students what demonstrates to all that the Beit HaMikdash is holy?

Using slide 5, frontally teach Melakhim Alef Chapter 8, verses 10-11, and ask: What elements show that God has chosen to dwell in the Temple?

Students should identify the anan and Kevod Hashem. To explain Kevod Hashem in class, note that it is the Biblical term which is equivalent to “Shechina” in Hazal, and that it designates the Presence of God. (Teachers who are interested in exploring this further can read chapter 5 of my book *The Unbeatable Light* [AOAT/Munster, 2012]). Students may then ask “Why are these the elements that show that God dwells

Use this as a lead-in to the second section of the worksheet, which asks students to explore the reasons for these elements designating God’s dwelling in the Temple.

Second Worksheet: Comparing the Mishkan, First Temple, and Second Temple

In reviewing this worksheet, use slide 6 to answer questions 1-2. Students should understand not only what the similarities are, but why it's so critical for Torah to emphasize these. The mishkan is a moveable version of the closeness to God that was experienced at Har Sinai.

Then review questions 3-4 using slide 6 – the same elements were there in the First Temple to show the same idea of closeness to God, continuing the experience of Har Sinai.

Then review questions 5 and 7 using slide 7 – none of these elements were present in the second Temple. Students should appreciate the lack of a direct symbol of Shechina in the second Temple. They should all understand the basic reason such a lack was so palpable (viz., the direct symbol of Shechina had been present in the dedication of the First Temple) and some will also appreciate the non-fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy (in challenge question 6 on the worksheet). Ezekiel 43 is based on the First Temple and Mishkan narratives.

Conclusion

Use slide 8 to review the main reasons why the Second Temple does not live up to expectations:

- a. Financial problems
- b. Lack of support from Persian Empire
- c. Lack of clear indicator of Shechina

Ask which of these points are solvable – students should realize that points a and b are not necessarily solvable within the political reality of the Persian empire.

Ask students to write an essay discussing, based on Ezra 3 and the passages they studied, why the Returnees were disappointed in the Second Temple.

This will provide an important background introduction to Isaiah chapter 60.