

בהעלותך

Zechariah, chapter 2, verse 14 to chapter 4, verse 7

Introduction

Connection of sidra and haftarah:

The sidra begins with instructions for the seven-branched candlestick in the Tabernacle; the haftarah ends with a vision of the candelabrum in the Jerusalem Temple. This was one of the reasons that caused the Rabbis to choose this haftarah also for the Shabbat during the Chanukah week.¹

The setting:

Zechariah lived in an exciting time. In the year 538 B.C.E. the Persian ruler, Cyrus, had permitted the Judean exiles to return to their homeland, and the work on the new Temple had begun shortly thereafter. But after a while it lagged; other priorities emerged for the people. Two prophets, Haggai and his younger contemporary Zechariah, urged the completion of the task, and they were the major reason that the work was taken up again and eventually completed.² Zechariah's visions illustrate his commitment to the Temple as the community's central institution. It was presided over by Joshua, a high priest of distinguished ancestry, while the secular polity was headed by Zerubbabel, a descendant of the Davidic line, who was appointed to his position as governor by King Darius of Persia.

For more on Zechariah and his time, see our *General Introduction*.

The message:

1. Four introductory verses of encouragement: the Presence of the Eternal will once again make Jerusalem its dwelling place. (2:14-17)
2. The vision and parable of the high priest's old and new garments. (3:1- 5)
3. The importance of following the divine instructions. (6-10)
4. The vision and parable of the candelabrum, ending with a puzzle. (4:1-7)