

Haftarah Helper 5780: Re'eh

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Dedicated in memory of Rabbi Adin Even Israel Steinsaltz zt”l- “A once in a millennium scholar”

Isaiah 54:11-55:5

In this third of the seven haftarot of consolation (Aramaic: שבוע דנחמתא), God speaks to Jerusalem, promising to rebuild her in splendor, peace, and righteousness; to bring peace to her inhabitants; and, to protect her from all future destruction. God then turns to the Jewish people, promising them spiritual renewal, and the return of the Davidic monarchy. Additionally, other nations will seek out God through the Jewish people.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 54:11-12: Jerusalem is afflicted, but God will restore her physical splendor...

Isaiah 54:11	ישעיהו נ"ד:י"א
O afflicted, storm-tossed one who is not comforted - Behold! I will set your stones with turquoise ¹ , and I will lay your foundations with sapphires.	עֲנִיָּה סֹעָרָה לֹא נִחְמָה הִנֵּה אֲנִי מַרְבִּיץ בַּפִּזָּךְ אֲבִנֶיךָ יִסְדֶּיתִיךָ בַּסַּפִּירִים:

Verses 54:13-14: ...and promises that her inhabitants will be righteous, have peace, and know God.

Isaiah 54:13	ישעיהו נ"ד:י"ג
And all your children shall be disciples of the Lord, and your children's peace shall be great.	וְכָל-בְּנֶיךָ לְמוֹדֵי ה' וְרַב שְׁלוֹם בְּנֶיךָ:

Verses 54:15-17: God will prevent evil from occurring to Jerusalem, due to her righteousness.

Isaiah 54:17	ישעיהו נ"ד:י"ז
Any weapon forged against you shall not succeed, and any tongue that contends with you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their due reward from Me, says the Lord.	כָּל-כְּלִי יוֹצֵר עָלֶיךָ לֹא יִצְלַח וְכָל-לָשׁוֹן תִּקְוִים-אֶתְךָ לְמִשְׁפָּט תִּרְשָׁעִי זֹאת נַחֲלַת עַבְדִּי ה' וְיִדְקָתֶם מֵאֵתִי נְאֻם-ה' (ו)

Verses 55:1-2: Heed God's word to find spiritual satiety.

Isaiah 55:2	ישעיהו נ"ה:ב
Why weigh out silver for what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Harken diligently to Me and eat what is good, and your soul shall delight in fatness.	לָמָּה תִּשְׁקָלוּ-כֶּסֶף בְּלוֹא-לֶחֶם וְיִגְיעְכֶם בְּלוֹא לִשְׂבָעָה שְׁמַעוּ שְׁמוּעָה אֵלַי וְאִכְלוּ-טוֹב וְתִתְעַנְּג בְּדָשָׁן נַפְשְׁכֶם:

¹ The identity of the stone mentioned is unclear. The translation is an approximation.

Haftarah Breakdown (cont.)

Verses 55:3-4: The Davidic monarchy will be restored...

Isaiah 55:3	ישעיהו נ"ה:ג
Incline your ear and come to Me; hearken and your soul shall live. I will make for you an everlasting covenant, the enduring love [promised to] David.	הִטּוּ אָזְנוֹכֶם וּלְכוּ אֵלַי שְׁמְעוּ וַתְּחִי נַפְשְׁכֶם וְאֶכְרַתֶּה לָכֶם בְּרִית עוֹלָם חֶסֶד דָּוִד הַנְּאֻמִּים:

Verse 55:5: ... and other nations will come to the people of Israel in order to find God.

Isaiah 55:5	ישעיהו נ"ה:ה
Behold, a nation you do not know you shall call, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, for the sake of the Lord your God and for the Holy One of Israel, for He glorified you.	הֵן גּוֹי לֹא־תִדְעַתְּ תִקְרָא וְגוֹי לֹא־יָדְעוּךָ אֵלֶיךָ יָרוּצוּ לְמַעַן ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְלִקְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי פָאֲרָךְ:

Important Themes

Exalted Splendor: God promises Jerusalem and the Jewish people unprecedented status. See verses 54:11-15, 55:3-5.

Connection with God: The Jewish people will achieve peace and righteousness, particularly via knowledge of God. Additionally, others will seek God through them. See verses 54:13-14, 55:1-5.

Other Connections

The conclusion of Masechet Brachot, which appears several times in the siddur, is derived from 54:13.

Berakhot 64a	ברכות ס"ד עמוד א
Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Hanina said: "Torah scholars increase peace in the world, as it is said: 'And all your children [banayikh] shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children' (Isaiah 54:13). [Interpret this verse homiletically:] Do not pronounce this as 'your children [banayikh],' but as 'your builders [bonayikh].'" As it is stated: "Those who love Your Torah have great peace; there is no stumbling block for them" (Psalms 119:165); ... "May the Lord give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace" (Psalms 29:11).	אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: תַּלְמִידֵי חֻכְמַיִם מַרְבִּים שְׁלוֹם בְּעוֹלָם, שְׁנֹאֲמַר: "וְכָל בְּנֵיךָ לְמוֹדֵי ה' וְרַב שְׁלוֹם בְּנֵיךָ". אֵל תִּקְרִי "בְּנֵיךָ" אֶלֶּא "בּוֹנֵיךָ". "שְׁלוֹם רַב לְאַהֲבֵי תוֹרָתְךָ וְאִין לְמוֹ מְכֻשׁוֹל"..." ה' עֲזֵר לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן ה' יְבָרֶךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשְׁלוֹם.

This Haftarah is also the source of the well-known comparison between water and the Torah.

Bava Kamma 17a	בבא קמא י"ז עמוד א
Water refers only to [the study of] Torah, as Scripture states: "Ho, all who are thirsty, go to water." (Isaiah 55:1)	וְאִין מִים אֶלֶּא תוֹרָה שְׁנֹאֲמַר (ישעיהו נה, א) הוּא כָּל צֶמָא לְכוּ לְמִים

With emendations, biblical translations are by Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg and other translations are from Sefaria.org.

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