

# Haftarah Helper 5781: Vayikrah

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## Isaiah 43:21-44:23

The final third of Isaiah (Chap. 40-66) is known for its great prophecies of redemption and comfort. The Haftarah follows a description of the astounding future redemption of God's people, Israel, from its Babylonian exile, and opens with Israel, in the future, praising God for that salvation. God and Isaiah then critique Israel for its past and present failings which rightfully prevent that redemption: Israel's luxurious sacrifices to God do not please Him; instead, His people's sins weary Him. (This critique of sinners' sacrifices complements the Parashah's sacrificial laws.) Isaiah then proclaims that God will nonetheless redeem His chosen people, wipe away their sins, and bless them; in turn, they shall proudly become loyal to Him. Isaiah excoriates nonsensical idolatry at length and in withering terms to remind Israel of the majesty and benefit of servitude to its Creator, inspiring it to aspire to its glorious future redemption.

## Haftarah Breakdown

Verse 43:21: In the future, Israel will praise God for redeeming them from Babylon...

Isaiah 43:21	ישעיהו מ"ג:כ"א
This people have I formed for Myself; they shall recount My praise.	עם-זֶה יָצַרְתִּי לֵי תְהִלָּתִי יִסְפֹּרוּ: (ס)

Verse 43:22-24: ...but in the present, their sins weary Him and their sacrifices displease Him.

Isaiah 43:24	ישעיהו מ"ג:כ"ד
You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, nor have you sated Me with the fat of your sacrifices - but you have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.	לֹא־קָנַיתִ לְיִכְלֹף קָנָה וְתָלַב זְבַחֲךָ לֹא הָרַוְתָּנִי אֵך קָעַבְתָּמִנִּי בְּחַטֹּאתָוָתֶךָ הַגַּעֲנַתָּנִי בְּשֻׁונְתָּךָ: (ס)

Verses 43:25: God will forgive their sins even though they do not deserve forgiveness.

Isaiah 43:25	ישעיהו מ"ג:כ"ה
I, I, am he who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.	אָנֹכִי אָנֹכִי הוּא מִזֶּה פְּשָׁעִיךָ לְמַעַן וְחַטֹּאתְךָ לֹא אָזֶב:

Verses 43:26-28: God challenges the people to defend and justify themselves; they have no reply. He will therefore punish them for their ancestors' and current leaders' sins.

Isaiah 43:26	ישעיהו מ"ג:כ"ו
Remind Me - let us adjudicate together! Speak, you! - so that you may be found righteous.	הַזְּכִירֵנִי נִשְׁפְּטוּה יְחִידׁ סְפִר אַתָּה לְמַעַן תִּצְדַּק

Verses 44:1-5: Having chastised and forgiven their sins, God will bless Israel, His chosen people. Flourishing, they will dedicate themselves proudly and wholly to Him.

Isaiah 44:3	ישעיהו מ"ג:ג
For I [God] will pour water upon thirsty [land], and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour My spirit upon your descendants, and My blessing upon your offspring.	כִּי אַצְקָמֶת עַל־צָמָא וַנְזָלִים עַל־יְבָשָׂה אַצְקָרָיו עַל־עֲרָשָׂה וּבְרָכָתִי עַל־צָאצָאים:

Verses 44:6-8: God's eternal people, Israel, must never fear idolators since Israelites are His "witnesses" that He alone controls the world.

Isaiah 44:8	ישעיהו מ"ד:ג
Fear not, nor be afraid! Have I not told your thee from then [i.e., long ago] and declared it? You are My witnesses! Is there a God beside me? There is no [other] rock [e.g., god, that] I do not know.	אַל־תִּפְחֹדׁוּ אֵלָי־תְּرֹהֹה הַלֹּא מִזֶּן הַשְׁמָעָתִיךְ וְהַגְּדוּתִי וְאַתֶּם עָדִי הַיָּשֵׁא אַלְוֹהֵס מִפְלָעָתִי וְאֵין צָאָר בְּלִינְרָעָתִי

Verses 44:9-20: Idol worshippers engage in ineffective spirituality and intellectual folly.

Isaiah 44:9	ישעיהו מ"ד:ט
All the idol makers are a void, their delights do not profit, their witnesses [i.e., idols] neither see nor know - they should be ashamed.	יִצְרָאֵפֶל בָּלְטָה תָּהּוּ וְחַמְדָתֵיכֶם בְּלִי־וֹעַלְוֹ וְעַדְתֵיכֶם הַמְּהֻהָה בְּלִירָאוּ וּבְלִידָעוּ לְמַעַן יְבָשָׁוּ:

Verses 44:21-23: Remembering this folly, Israel will remain firmly in their Creator's service. All Creation will rejoice when they return to Him and He redeems them.

Isaiah 44:23	ישעיהו מ"ד:כ"ג
Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout, O lower parts of the earth! Break forth into singing, O mountains; O forest, and every tree in it! For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorifies himself in Israel!	רָנֶשׁ שְׂמִים כִּי־עָשָׂה יְהֹהָה הַרְיעָשׁוּ מִתְהִיטּוֹת אָרֶץ פָּצַחּוּ קָרִים רָנֶה נְעָרָה וְכָל־עַזָּה בָּוּ כִּירְגָּאֵל הַיְעָקָב וּבְשֻׁׁרְאָלָל יְתַפְּאָרָה:

## Connections

The central blessing of the Yom Kippur Amidah cites many verses from the Haftarah.

Yom Kippur Machzor, Musaf, Amidah, Sanctification of the Day	מחזר ליום כיפור, מוסף, עמידה, קדושת היום
Our God and God of our forefathers: pardon our iniquities on this Yom Kippur; wipe away and remove all our transgressions and sins from before Your eyes, as it is said: "I, I, am he who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25) And it is said: "I have wiped away, like mist, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins; return to Me, for I have redeemed you." (ibid. 44:22)	אלֹקֶינוּ וְאֱלֹקֶינוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, מַחְלֵל לְעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ בַּיּוֹם הַכִּיפּוֹרִים הַזֶּה, מַחְהַ וְהַעֲבָר פְשָׁעֵנוּ וְחַטָּאתֵנוּ מְנַגְּד עַיִנִיק, כְּאָמָר (ישעיהו מג, כה): אֲנִכִּי אֲנִכִּי הָוּ מְקֻהָה פְשָׁעֵיךְ לְמַעַן וְחַטָּאתְךָ לֹא אָכְפֵר, וְנִאָמָר (שם מד, כב): מְחִיתִי בָּעֵב פְשָׁעֵיךְ וְכַעֲנוּ חַטָּאתִיךְ שׁוֹבֵה אַלְיִי כִּי גָאָלְתִּיךְ

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