

Haftarah Helper 5781: Yitro

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Isaiah 6:1-6:13¹; 7:1-6²; 9:5-6³

God reveals Himself to Isaiah in the year of King Uzziah's death⁴. Chapter 6 portrays this revelation, similar to God's Revelation at Sinai. Isaiah perceives God's throne, angels, and glory filling a great hall and the entire world. God calls him to prophesy to Judah. Judah will reject his words, and He will therefore destroy them. Nonetheless, God reassures Isaiah - and decades later, in chapter 7, Judah and its leaders - that He will preserve a portion of His holy people. The Haftarah culminates by jumping ahead to a brief, third passage⁵ in chapter 9. Two verses convey God's promise of a morally and spiritually rejuvenated Davidic dynasty that will reign forever, heralding a messianic era.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 6:1-4: Isaiah has a prophetic vision of God, and of angels recounting His glory.

Isaiah 6:1	ישעיהו ו:א
In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.	בשנת־מות המלך עזִּיָּהוּ רָאֵתִי אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי יְשׁוּבַע עַל־כִּסֵּא רָם וְנִשְׂא וְשׁוּלְיוֹ מִלְאִים אֶת־הַהֵיכָל:

Verse 6:5: Isaiah fears that he does not deserve his vision, and therefore will die.

Isaiah 6:5	ישעיהו ו:ה
Then said I, "Woe is me for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."	וַאֲמַר אֲוִי־לִי כִי־נִדְמִיתִי כִי אִישׁ טִמְא־שִׁפְתַיִם אָנֹכִי וּבְתוֹךְ עַם־טִמְא שִׁפְתַיִם אָנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב בֵּי אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ ה' צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינָי:

Verses 6:6-7: An angel cleanses Isaiah of sin.

Isaiah 6:7	ישעיהו ו:ז
And he [the angel] laid [a hot coal] upon my mouth, and said, "Lo, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged."	וַיִּגַע עַל־פִּי וַאֲמַר הִנֵּה נִגַע זֶה עַל־שִׁפְתַיִךְ וְכִרְ עֲוֹנֶךָ וְחַטְאֹתֶיךָ תִּכַּפֵּר:

Verses 6:8-10: God gives Isaiah his mission: prophecy to a scornful people to repent - but they will refuse...

Isaiah 6:9	ישעיהו ו:ט
And He said, "Go, and tell these people, 'Hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not.'"	וַאֲמַר לְךָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לְעַם הַזֶּה שְׁמַעוּ שְׁמוֹעַ וְאַל־תִּבְיִנוּ וּרְאוּ רְאוּ וְאַל־תִּדְעוּ:

¹ Sepharadim recite only this passage.

² Only Ashkenazim add this passage.

³ Ashkenazim and Yemenite Jews add this passage.

⁴ Chazal place Isaiah's inauguration as prophet earlier, when Uzziah was stricken with tzara'at ("leprosy"), making him "dead" and unable to rule effectively; see 2 Kings 15.

⁵ Third for Ashkenazim, and second for Yemenites. As noted, Sepharadim recite only chapter 6.

Verses 6:11-13: ...therefore, God will lay waste to all but a faithful remnant of Judah - and even it shall be afflicted.

Isaiah 6:13	ישעיהו ו:י"ג
One-tenth shall remain in [Judah]. It too shall be consumed -but like a terebinth and like an oak, whose stump remains when casting off their leaves; its stump is holy seed.	וְעוֹד בְּהַ עֲשָׂרִיָּה וְנִשְׁבָּה וְהִיְתָה לְכַעַר בְּאַלְנָה וְכַאֲלוֹן אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁלְכָת מִצָּבָת כֹּם זָרַע קֹדֶשׁ מִצָּבָתָהּ: (פ)

Verses 7:1-7:6: Decades later, the Northern Kingdom, Israel (“Ephraim”), and its neighbor, Aram (Syria), plan to attack Jerusalem. God instructs Isaiah to reassure Judah and its wicked king, Ahaz, that the attack will fail.

Isaiah 7:2	ישעיהו ז:ב
The house of David was told, saying, “Aram is allied with Ephraim.” Its heart and the heart of its people was moved [with fear], as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind.	וַיִּגְד לְבֵית דָּוִד לֵאמֹר נִגְזַח אֲרָם עִל־אֶפְרַיִם וַיִּנָּע לִבָּב וְלִבְ עַמּוֹ כְּנֹעַ עֲצֵי־יַעַר מִפְּנֵי־רוּחַ:

Verses 9:5-6: Isaiah prophesies the birth and eternal reign of a future righteous Davidic king.

Isaiah 9:6	ישעיהו ט:ו
[The wonder child is born] for the increase of the realm and for peace without end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to found it and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this!	לְמַרְבֵּה [לְמַרְבֵּה] הַמְּשֻׁרָה וְלִשְׁלוֹם אֲיוֹ־קִיץ עִל־כִּסֵּא דָּוִד וְעִל־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ לְהִקְיִן אֶת־הָ וְלִסְעִדָּה בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבְצִדְקָה מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם קִנְיָתָהּ ה' צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה־נְאֻמָּתָה: (ס)

Connections

Parts of Isaiah’s vision of God’s glory can be found in **Kedushah**, recited during the repetition of the Amidah.

Siddur Ashkenaz, Weekday, Amidah, Kedushah	סידור אשכנז, חול, עמידה, קדושה
We will hallow Your Name in the world as they hallow it in the heavens above, as is written by Your prophet’s hand, “One called to another and said, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.’”	נְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת־שִׁמְךָ בְּעוֹלָם כְּשֵׁם שִׁמְקֻדְיָשִׁים אוֹתוֹ בְּשָׁמַי מְרוֹם. כְּפָתוּב עִל־יַד נְבִיאָךְ וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל־זֶה וְאָמַר: קֹדֶשׁ קֹדֶשׁ קֹדֶשׁ ה' צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:

The Talmud presents a heavenly **debate whether King Hezekiah deserved to be the Messiah**, based on v. 9:6, above.

Sanhedrin 94a	סנהדרין צ"ד א'
Bar Kappara taught...: “Why is every [Hebrew letter] ‘mem’ in the middle of a word open, but this “mem” [of the word לַמְּרַבָּה], is closed? The Holy One, blessed be He, sought to designate King Hezekiah as the Messiah, and Sennacherib and Assyria, [respectively,] as [his enemies,] Gog and Magog. The attribute of justice said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: ‘Master of the Universe! David, king of Israel, recited many songs and praises before You, yet You did not designate him as Messiah. But Hezekiah, for whom You performed all these miracles, yet he did not recite songs before You - You will designate <i>him</i> as the Messiah?’ Therefore, the mem was closed.”	דרש בר קפרא... מפני מה כל מ"ם שבאמצע תיבה פתוח וזה סתום? ביקש הקב"ה לעשות חזקיהו משיח וסנחריב גוג ומגוג. אמרה מדת הדין לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע ומה דוד מלך ישראל שאמר כמה שירות ותשבחות לפניך לא עשיתו משיח. חזקיהו שעשית לו כל הנסים הללו ולא אמר שירה לפניך תעשהו משיח! לכך נסתתם.

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