



Shemot (Ashkenazim): Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23

Isaiah prophesied the words of this Haftarah when the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim) and Southern Kingdom (Judah) were large, powerful, wealthy - yet vulnerable. Assyria had already conquered and exiled some of the Northern Kingdom, and threatened both kingdoms. Other exiles were in Egypt and elsewhere.

The Haftarah's first section, the end of chapter 27, concludes a series of powerfully apocalyptic yet hopeful visions about the world and the Jewish people. Isaiah rebukes the people for idolatrously defecting from God, reminds them of God's merciful justice, and urges them - despite exilic despair abroad and geopolitical threats at home - to return to Him alone. This repentance will prevent further disaster and prompt God to create a glorious new reality. He will return the exiles languishing in faraway lands to Jerusalem where they will no longer be divided from one another but will instead be united in His service at His holy mountain. Just as God redeemed the Israelites from their seemingly interminable Egyptian exile in the Parashah, so too will He redeem them in the Haftarah - and in the messianic future, too.

The Haftarah's second section, the opening of chapter 28, opens a series of harsh prophecies against Judah. Using the Northern Kingdom and its drunken leaders as an example (verses 1-6), Isaiah ferociously castigates Judah's powerful priests, prophets, and officials for their disgusting hedonism, corruption, pride, as well as their mockery and neglect of God, His prophets, and His teachings to care for society's needy. This passage includes no call for repentance. Apparently, hedonism's pleasures and attitudes are irretrievably self-destructive, precluding spiritual and moral change more powerfully than even defection to another god.

Nonetheless, keeping with the general rule that a Haftarah must conclude on an uplifting note, it skips dozens of harsh verses ahead to conclude with two verses of redemption from the end of chapter 29. They portray the people's forefather and namesake, Jacob, one day taking pride in his future descendants proudly serving God.¹

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 27:6-11: One day, Jacob's descendants shall take root and prosper, benefitting the entire world. In the meantime, God will punish them for idolatry, destroy Jerusalem, and exile them.

Isaiah 27:9	ישעיהו כ"ז:ט
Therefore, with this shall Jacob be atoned, and this is all the fruit to remove his sin. He must make all the altar stones as chalkstones that are beaten asunder; the idolatrous trees and sun images must not stand.	לְכֹן בְּזֹאת יִכָּפֵר עֲוֹן־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְזֶה כָּל־פְּרִי הַסֵּר חֲטָאתוֹ בְּשֹׁמְרוֹ כָּל־אֲבָנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ כְּאֲבָנֵי־גֶר מִגִּפְצוֹת לֹא־יָקֻמוּ אֲשֶׁר־יָם וְחַמְגִּים:

Verses 27:12-13: Afterwards, God will extract His exiled people from afar and gather them to serve Him in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 27:13	ישעיהו כ"ז:י"ג
It shall come to pass on that day that a great horn shall be blown. Those lost in the land of Assyria and those banished in the land of Egypt shall come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain in Jerusalem.	וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל וְבָאוּ הַאֲבָדִים בְּאֶרֶץ אַשּׁוּר וְהַנִּדְחִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיהוָה בְּהַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

¹ This introduction includes numerous ideas from R. Moshe Lichtenstein's [analysis](#) of this difficult Haftarah.

Verses 28:1-4: The drunken and haughty leaders of the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim) will lead to its downfall.

Isaiah 28:1	ישעיהו כ"ח:א
Woe to Ephraim's drunkards' haughty crown and its fading blossom's glorious beauty on the head of a rich valley of those overcome with wine!	הוֹי עֲטֹרַת גְּאוֹת שִׁכְרֵי אֶפְרַיִם וְצִיץ נֶבֶל צְבִי תִפְאֶרְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשׁ גִּיא־שִׁמְנִים הַלְוִיָּהּ יָיִן:

Verses 28:5-6: God will be the crown for the few survivors of Ephraim's destruction. God will inspire them with judicial wisdom and military strength.

Isaiah 28:5	ישעיהו כ"ח:ה
On that day the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty for the remnant of His people.	בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה' צְבָאוֹת לְעֲטֹרַת צְבִי וְלִצְפִירַת תִּפְאָרֶה לְשֹׁאֵר עַמּוֹ:

Verses 28:7-8: Judah's leaders are also drunkards, wallowing in their vomit.

Isaiah 28:7	ישעיהו כ"ח:ז
These [Judah's leaders] too, reeled from wine and erred from strong drink. Priest and prophet reeled from strong drink. They are soaked with wine, they erred from strong drink. They reeled in [their] vision, they totter in judgment.	וְגַם־אֱלֹהֵי בִינָיו שָׁגוּ וּבִשְׁכָר תַּעֲוּ כֹהֵן וְנָבִיא שָׁגוּ בִשְׁכָר נִבְלְעוּ מִן־הַיַּיִן תַּעֲוּ מִן־הַשְּׂכָר שָׁגוּ בְרֹאֵה פָקוּ פְּלִילִיָּה:

Verses 28:9-13: God will punish Judah's leaders for mocking His prophets and refusing to care for the vulnerable.

Isaiah 28:12	ישעיהו כ"ח:י"ב
For He said to them, "This is [how to get] the rest [you seek]: give rest to the weary, and this [will give you] tranquility" - but they refused to listen.	אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֲלֵיהֶם זֹאת הַמְנוּחָה הַנְּחִיחוּ לַעֲיָף וְזֹאת הַמְרַגְעָה וְלֹא אָבוּא שְׁמוֹעַ:

Verses 29:22-23: One day, forefather Jacob will take pride in his descendants as they sanctify his God's Name.

Isaiah 29:23	ישעיהו כ"ט:כ"ג
For when he [Jacob] sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst sanctifying My name, [he will see] them sanctifying the Holy One of Jacob, and revering the God of Israel.	כִּי־בִרְאֹתוֹ יִלְדָּיו מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי בְרָכָתוֹ יִקְדִּישׁוּ שְׁמִי וְהִקְדִּישׁוּ אֶת־קְדוּשַׁי יִעֲלֹב וְאֶת־אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִעֲרִיצוּ:

Connections

The **tenth blessing of the Amidah** derives its language from God's promise in 27:13 (above).

Siddur Ashkenaz, Weekday, Amidah	סידור אשכנז, ימי חול, עמידה
Sound the great shofar for our liberty, and raise a banner to gather our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You, God, Gatherer of the dispersed of His people Israel.	תִּקַּע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְהַרְוֹתֵנוּ וְשֵׂא נֶס לְקַבֵּץ גְּלוּיֹתֵינוּ וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יַחַד מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מְקַבֵּץ נִדְחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

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