

Yitro: Isaiah 6:1-6:13; 7:1-6; 9:5-6¹



In the year of King Uzziah's death, ca. 740 BCE², God reveals Himself to Isaiah. With themes of fire, smoke, fear, and holiness similar to the revelation at Sinai described in the Parashah, Isaiah perceives God, His throne, garments, and angels, as well as the divine glory that fills a great hall and the entire world. Isaiah is terrified, so an angel purifies him of sin. God calls him to deliver His messages to Judah. Judah will reject his words, and God will destroy most of them while preserving a small portion of His holy people. A few years later, this vision has seemingly come to pass, with Judah under physical threat by its northern neighbors, Israel and Aram, and under spiritual threat by its idolatrous king, Ahaz. Isaiah tells Ahaz not to fear: Israel and Aram, not Judah, will soon be destroyed. The Haftarah ends on a positive note by skipping two chapters ahead to two verses that convey God's promise of a morally and spiritually rejuvenated Davidic dynasty.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 6:1-4: Isaiah has a prophetic vision of God in a throne room. The chamber trembles as six-winged fiery angels recount God's holiness, declaring that His glory fills the entire world.

Isaiah 6:1	ישעיהו ו:א
In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the sanctuary.	בשנת־מות המלך עזיהו נאראה את־אדני ישב על־כסא רם ונשא ושוֹליו מלאים את־ההיכל:

Verse 6:5: After this powerful vision of God, Isaiah is fearful since he and his nation are sinful and have defiled lips.

Isaiah 6:5	ישעיהו ו:ה
I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips- for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."	ואמר עוֹלְלִי כִי־נִדְמִיתִי כִי אִישׁ טִמְא־שִׁפְתַיִם אֲנִי וּבְתוֹךְ עַם־טִמְא שִׁפְתַיִם אֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב כִּי אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ ה' צִבְקוֹת רָאוּ עֵינָי:

Verses 6:6-7: A fiery angel cleanses Isaiah of sin by touching a coal from the altar to his lips.

Isaiah 6:7	ישעיהו ו:ז
[The angel] touched [a hot altar coal] to my mouth, and said, "Lo, this has touched your lips. Your iniquity is removed, and your sin is atoned for."	וַיַּגַּע עַל־פִּי וַאֲמַר הִנֵּה נִגַּע זֶה עַל־שִׁפְתַיִךְ וְסֵר עֲוֹנֶךָ וְחַטְאֶתְךָ תִּכַּפֵּר:

Verses 6:8-10: God declares that He seeks a messenger, and Isaiah volunteers. His mission is to urge God's people to repent - but they will refuse.

Isaiah 6:9	ישעיהו ו:ט
[God] said, "Go and tell this people, "Listen diligently, but you will not understand. See diligently, but you will not know."	וַאֲמַר לְךָ וְאִמַּרְתָּ לְעַם הַזֶּה שְׁמַעוּ שְׁמֹעַ וְאַל־תֵּבִינוּ וּרְאוּ רְאוּ וְאַל־תִּדְעוּ:

¹ Sepharadim recite only this passage, Ashkenazim read all three passages, and Yemenite Jews read the first and third passages.

² The Talmud (Horayot 10a) places Isaiah's inauguration as prophet earlier, when Uzziah was stricken with tzara'at ("leprosy") [ca. 750 BCE], making him "dead" and unable to rule effectively; see 2 Kings 15.

Verses 6:11-13: Isaiah asks how long the people will not understand. God answers that only a tenth of Judah will survive His punishing destruction- and even this stump-like, holy remnant will be afflicted.

Isaiah 6:13	ישעיהו ו:י"ג
One-tenth shall remain in [Judah], and it too shall be consumed - as a terebinth or as an oak, whose stump remains when casting off their leaves; its stump is holy seed.	ועוד בה עשריה ושבה והיתה לבָּעַר כָּאלֵה וְכָאֵלוֹן אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁלְכָתָּ מִצָּבַת בָּם וְרַע קֹדֶשׁ מִצָּבָתָהּ: (פ)

Verses 7:1-7:6: A few years later, the Northern Kingdom, Israel (“Ephraim”), and its neighbor, Aram (Syria), allied to conquer Jerusalem. God instructs Isaiah to tell its terrified king, Ahaz, not to fear because 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 a forest’s trees move due to the wind.	וַיֵּד לְבַיִת דָּוִד לֵאמֹר נִגְזַח אֲרָם עִלְאֲפְרַיִם וַיִּנַּע לִבָּבוֹ וּלְבַב עַמּוֹ כְּנֹעַ עֲצֵי־יַעַר מִפְּנֵי־רוּחַ:

Verses 9:5-6: Isaiah prophesies the birth and 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 unending peace upon David’s throne and upon his kingdom- to found it and to establish it with judgment and righteousness, from now and forever. The Lord of Hosts’ zeal shall perform this!	לֵם רַבָּה [לְמַרְבֵּה] הַמְשִׁיחָה וְלִשְׁלוֹם אֵי־וָקֶץ עַל־כִּפְסֵי דָוִד וְעַל־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ לְהַקִּיֵּן אֶת־הָאֵלֹהִים וְלִסְעִדָּהּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבְצִדְקָהּ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם קִנְיַת ה' צְבָקוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה־זֹאת: (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 שֶׁמְקַדְּשִׁים אוֹתוֹ בְּשָׁמַיִם מְרוֹם. כְּכַתּוּב עַל־יַד נְבִיאֶךָ וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל־זֶה וְאָמַר: קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ 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'
Why is every [Hebrew letter] ‘mem’ in the middle of a word open, but this “mem” [of the word רבה לם], is closed? The Holy One, blessed be He, sought to designate King Hezekiah as the Messiah, and Sennacherib and Assyria as [his enemies,] Gog and Magog. The attribute of justice said before [God]: “Master of the Universe! David, king of Israel, who recited many songs and praises before You - You did not designate him as Messiah! But Hezekiah, for whom You did all these miracles, but he recited no song before You - You will designate <i>him</i> as the Messiah?” Therefore, the mem was closed.	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 נסתם.

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