



Bereishit: Isaiah 42:5-43:10¹

The Haftarah expands upon the Parashah's presentation of God as Creator. It recounts God's creation and choice of His servants, Israel, to be a righteous "covenantal people," a "light of the nations," and "My witnesses."

The unprecedented exiles and redemptions of His people should lead them, and all humanity, to reject idolatry and recognize Him as the only true god. In reality, however, those exiled in Babylon and beyond do not understand that they suffer as God's punishment for their earlier sins, as part of their role in God's plan. They do not believe that God will redeem them from their dispersion and punish His and their idolatrous enemies. Their very suffering magnifies their inability to understand these things.

Since Israel is blind, deaf, and lacks its own righteousness, God must make His teaching great for the sake of His own righteousness, and redeem them. Humanity will then sing new songs to honor God for redeeming Israel. Israel and humanity will finally understand that the Creator's role in Israel's redemptions and exiles, particularly when predicted in advance by His prophets, testifies to God's eternity and omnipotence and to the error of idolatry.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 42:5-9: The Creator designated His righteous "covenantal people", Israel, as a "light of the nations." Just as He fulfilled earlier promises, so too He will fulfill His promise to redeem them from their exile.

Isaiah 42:6	ישעיהו מ"ב:ו
I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness and will hold your hand. I protected you, and appointed you as a covenantal people, as a light of the nations.	אָנִי ה' קָרָאתִיךָ בְּצִדְקָה וְאֶתְנַחֵם בְּנִגְחִי וְאֶצְרְךָ וְאֶתְנַחֵם לְבְרִית עִם לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם:

Verses 42:10-13: People across the world will celebrate with a "new song" to God as He arises as a mighty warrior to defeat His enemies and redeem His people.

Isaiah 42:10	ישעיהו מ"ב:י
Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from Earth's end, you who go down to the sea, and all therein; isles, and their inhabitants.	שִׁירוּ לַה' שִׁיר הַלְלוֹתָו מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ יוֹרְדֵי הַיָּם וּמִלְאוֹ אֲיִים וַיִּשְׁבְּיָהֶם:

Verses 42:14-17: Ending His self-restraint, the Creator will dramatically alter nature to create a straight, lit path for the returning exiles. This redemption will certainly occur, and will humiliate idolaters.

Isaiah 42:16	ישעיהו מ"ב:ט"ז
I [God] will cause the blind [exiles] to walk on a route that they have not known. I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make the darkness in front of them into light, and crooked things into a straight path. I have done these things, and have not forsaken them.	וְהוֹלַכְתִּי עֲוָרִים בְּדֶרֶךְ לֹא יָדְעוּ בְּנִתְיבוֹת לֹא-יָדְעוּ אֲדָרְכֵיכֶם אֲשִׁים מִחֹשֶׁךְ לְפָנֵיהֶם לְאוֹר וּמַעֲקוֹשִׁים לְמִישׁוֹר אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים עָשִׂיתֶם וְלֹא עֲזַבְתִּים:

¹ Sephardim read up until 42:21.

Verses 42:18-21: Although the exiles utterly fail to understand Isaiah's messages, God's own righteousness causes Him to make His Torah great and glorious.

Isaiah 42:19	ישעיהו מ"ב:י"ט
Who is blind, but My servant? And deaf, as My messenger whom I sent? Who is blind, as the perfect one? And blind, as the Lord's servant?	מי עור' כי אם-עבדי ותרוש כמלאכי אשלה מי עור' כמשלם ועור כעבד ה':

Verses 42:22-25: The terror and helplessness of exile prevent the exiles from understanding that their exile is God's punishment for their sins.

Isaiah 42:25	ישעיהו מ"ב:כ"ה
He [God] has poured upon him the fury of His anger and strength in battle. It has set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.	וישפך עליו חמה אפו ועזוז מלחמה ותלהטהו מסביב ולא ידע ותבער-בו ולא-ישים על-לב:

Verses 43:1-8: Nonetheless, Israel need not fear because even in exile, God is always with His beloved, chosen people, protecting them from every danger. God will end their exile by instructing their captors to free them, whom He will replace with other captive nations.

Isaiah 43:6	ישעיהו מ"ג:ו
I will say to the north, "Give up!"; and to the south, "Do not withhold!": Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth!	אמר לצפון תני ולתימן אל-תכלאי הביאי בני מרחוק ובנותי מקצה הארץ:

Verses 43:9-10: No other nation has accurately predicted its own future. By contrast, God's prophets have correctly foretold Israel's past redemptions, just as Isaiah's prophecy about their future redemption will be fulfilled. In this way, Israel's history testifies to God's existence and providence, and the falsity of idols.

Isaiah 43:10	ישעיהו מ"ג:י
"You are My witnesses," says the Lord, "and My servant whom I have chosen so that you know and rely on Me, and understand that I am He: before Me, no god was formed; nor shall there be after Me."	אתם עדל נא-מה' ועבדי אשר בחרתי למען תדעו ותאמינו לי ותבינו כי-אני הוא לפני לא-נוצר אל ואחרי לא יהיה: {ס}

Connection

The Mishnah interprets 42:21 to describe the **spiritual impact of the Torah and its numerous precepts** on the Jewish people.

Mishnah Makkot 3:16	משנה מכות ג:ט"ז
Rabbi Hananya ben Akashya says: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought to confer merit upon the Jewish people. Therefore, He increased Torah and mitzvot for them, as [Isa. 42:21] stated, 'The Lord desired for His righteousness's sake to make the Torah great and glorious.'"	רבי חנניא בן עקשיא אומר, רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל, לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות, שנאמר ה' חפץ למען צדקו יגדיל תורה ויאדיר:

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