

# Haftarat Re'eh ראה

**Torah: Deuteronomy 11:26–16:17**

**Haftarah: Isaiah 54:11–55:5**

## **A Glorified Woman**

### **General Overview**

This haftarah opens a new section of Isaiah's book. Its contents still fall within the overall context of chapters 40–66. The context closer to the haftarah, chapters 42–53, is a special section that focuses on the person and work of the Servant of the Lord. Then, chapters 54 and onward, center on the results of the work of the Servant.

Accordingly, there is not much rebuke in this part of Isaiah's prophecy. Rather there is a great deal of encouragement and comfort. Interestingly enough, there is also very little mention of the words Israel, Jacob, or Zion. Instead, there is an increased focus on the nations.

In this haftarah, we have the first of the great comforting passages following the accomplishment of the Servant's work in chapter 53. It is, perhaps, one of the best known passages in all of Isaiah. Its words have found their way into many notes of encouragement that believers have passed on to each other over the years.

From the opening image of a barren women turned productive, to the closing invitation to partake of God's abundance of goodness, it seems as if each line and each paragraph attempts to outdo the previous one in their goal to encourage God's people.

### **Connection to the Parasha**

The opening words of the Torah portion, 11:26–28, speak of the blessing for obedience and the curse for disobedience. These words have often been labelled "The Two Ways" by many commentators because they spell out two ways a person or a nation can go in their spiritual walk — either God's way or sin's way.

J. H. Hertz says that the haftarah is a great match for the Torah portion because the fulfilment of the great promises in this haftarah "is dependent on Israel's right choice in regard to the Two Ways."<sup>1</sup>

On one level, all of that is true. According to the Covenant of Moshe, blessing is a result of covenant faithfulness, whereas covenant unfaithfulness brings about trouble. However, as we have learned in previous haftarot, there comes a point in God's dealing with Israel when it seems like Israel has become so unfaithful to the covenant, that God resorts to performing a miracle in her midst whereby He will eventually overrule and cause Israel to be faithful to Him so that He can bring about the blessings described in this week's haftarah reading.

## **Exposition**

Textually and grammatically, God speaks of His people in this haftarah in the feminine gender. This is unusual. For example, this passage begins with a reference to a barren woman, then, the next section speaks about Israel being likened to a widow. These two “women” are actually the subjects of Haftarat Ki Tetze, which will come shortly. Those images are then followed by a reference to Israel as an afflicted one and as a glorified one. Both of these passages use feminine Hebrew pronouns.

Consequently, we have entitled this haftarah “God’s Troubled Woman” — Part I. We will then skip a week before the continuation of this theme in Haftarat Ki Tetze, which we have called “God’s Troubled Women” — Part II. Let’s get started with this Part One, wherein we will examine:

- I. An Afflicted Woman
- II. A Glorified Woman

In this excerpt from Haftarat Re’eh, we will focus on the section II, A Glorified Woman.

### **II. A Glorified Woman**

This is the “woman” described in 55:1-5. Like the previous “woman,” she is a grammatical creation. In other words, there is no specific woman that Isaiah has in mind in these verses. Rather, he is referring to those whom he is addressing by using the feminine pronoun in the Hebrew.

In order to understand the fullest intent of 55:1–5, we need to remember that this chapter comes after the description of the accomplished work of the Servant in Isaiah chapter 53. Chapter 54 describes some of the benefits of that work as they relate to the nations and to beleaguered Judah. Now, in chapter 55, Isaiah goes beyond nations or peoples and relates some of the benefits of the work of the Servant in the lives of individuals.

For example, a glance at the first verse reveals a grand universal appeal. The prophet shouts, “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters...” Dr. MacRae points out that

The language of this chapter is as wide as humanity. To be eligible for the indescribable blessings provided through the Servant’s work it is only necessary that one recognize his need. . . The note of universality is struck right in the first line. It is addressed to anyone who thirsts. It declares that God’s inexhaustible blessings are available to everyone who will receive them!<sup>2</sup>

Having said that, however, we also need to note that in verses 3 and 4, it seems that Isaiah is also specifically addressing Israel, while in 55:5 he makes a remarkable prediction concerning the nations. Let us take a brief look at each group separately.

### **A. To Everyone**

Isaiah makes a wonderful appeal to all of the people of the world in verses 1 and 2, and part of verse 3. Isaiah 55:2 addresses the group of people who try to satisfy their needs through material goods. In the end, they still have a deep-seated spiritual thirst. To such, the prophet issues a three-fold invitation to “come,” in verses 1–3.

He declares that He is the source of Living water. Only a personal relationship with the Servant/Messiah will truly satisfy all of our spiritual needs. Undoubtedly, these words had special meaning to the people of Isaiah’s day. This was a time of great material prosperity.<sup>3</sup> People were attempting to find their security in the things that they could acquire.

Thus, by preaching to them a free offer of the grace of God through the work of the Servant, Isaiah was hoping that they would not have to suffer the woes that are predicted elsewhere in this prophetic book. At the same time, because people everywhere are essentially the same, this passage and this invitation have a universal appeal. E. J. Young summarizes this appeal so well when he writes,

The prophet is an evangelist with a concern for the souls of men and a realization of their desperate condition without the blessings that the servant has obtained.<sup>4</sup>

### **B. For Israel**

At the same time, this passage has particular blessings to announce to Israel, the “widowed” woman that Isaiah referred to in the previous chapter. He tells her that God desired to renew the Davidic covenant with the nation.

In Isaiah’s day, the descendants of the house of David who ruled Judah were, by and large, unfaithful to the covenant. Of course there were several glaring exceptions. But, despite kings like Hezekiah and Josiah, the royal line of David needed to be revived. The Davidic covenant would need to be renewed.

The reason that Isaiah brings up David and the covenant is that,

during the reign of David, Israel’s kingdom reached its greatest extent. David as a faithful worshipper of the Lord was therefore, a witness to God’s truth to all the peoples in his empire, as well as being their leader.<sup>5</sup>

In essence, Isaiah was saying that “if it is abundance you want, remember King David and the spiritual as well as physical abundance that existed during his reign? You can have that through entering into his covenant.” They could do that through faith in the greatest son of David, King Messiah, The Servant of the Lord. When Israel would come under His kingship, all of the blessings described by Isaiah would then be realized.

### **C. For the Gentiles**

Finally, this section of our passage has some important things to say to the first woman, the barren one — the gentiles.

As we have seen hinted at throughout this haftarah, God clearly has His benefits for the gentiles on the forefront of His mind. They too, are some of the benefactors of the accomplished work of the Servant. Moreover, in 55:5, Isaiah tells Israel that they will be an instrument of the Lord to reach the gentiles. He tells them that they will call to the gentiles and the gentiles will come.

However, *the gentiles who will come will not replace Israel*. Instead, the text indicates that

Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you, because of the Lord your God, even the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you (55:5).

This, of course, began to happen right after the atoning work of Messiah Yeshua was accomplished. There was a mighty remnant of Israel who was faithful to the Holy One. He gave them the calling to go into the world and share the good news of the Messiah with the gentiles. Many of them believed. It was God's intention that this miracle should happen. It was also God's intention that when they came from the nations that they would come to Israel, to be a part of the remnant of God's holy covenanted nation called Israel.

That was just the beginning. The fullest expression of the unity of Jewish believers and gentile believers in Messiah is yet to happen. In that day Isaiah says Israel will be glorified. She will be glorified only when the number from among the nations comes in to her and they work together to live according to the covenants that God made with Israel. This too, will be one of the many results of the finished atonement accomplished by the death and resurrection of the Servant, Messiah Yeshua.

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<sup>1</sup> J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftarahs*, 518.

<sup>2</sup> Allan A. MacRae, *The Gospel of Isaiah*, 161.

<sup>3</sup> See Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 195.

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey W. Grogan, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* ("EBC"), vol. 6: "Isaiah," 312.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 312. It should be noted that Solomon extended the kingdom of David through political marriages. However, these lands did not "belong" to Israel, they were simply vassals.