

## Haftarat Noach נח

**Torah: Genesis 6:9–11:32**

**Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1–55:5**

### Israel is the Glorified One

#### General Overview

This haftarah is another one of the great encouraging passages found in the “comfort” section of Isaiah chapters 40–66. Its tone is in keeping with the opening verses of this great section (40:1), “Comfort, comfort my people.” The comfort, or better, compassion, comes mainly through the Servant, who was introduced in chapter 42.

Isaiah chapters 52–53 constitute the climax of the Servant passages. However, there is still much to be said of His redeeming work in our present passage, Haftarat Noach. The phrase, “the Servant of the Lord,” does not occur after Isaiah 53; in later chapters the prophet speaks instead of “servants of the Lord,” such as in 54:17. He describes how the followers of God’s true Servant are to enjoy the fruits of His accomplishment and yield themselves as instruments to do His bidding.<sup>1</sup>

One of the central topics of this haftarah is the marriage theme. Herein, the relationship between Israel, the wife, and God, the Husband, is uniquely explored with beautiful imagery. Finally, at the end of the haftarah, God’s concern for the salvation of the nations is mentioned. (Note for further study: This theme of marriage is merely touched on in this portion, but is more fully developed in chapter 56.)

As in the previous haftarah, the restoration of Israel seems to be the central emphasis. Indeed, there will be such a restoration that Zion’s suffering and humiliation will be forgotten in her glorious future.<sup>2</sup>

#### Connection to the Parasha

There is an obvious connection between this haftarah and Parashat Noach, which is found in Isaiah 54:9–10. In these verses God compares the covenant He made with Noach to the promises He is making with Israel. Just as God kept His word and has never sent such destruction by rain upon the earth as He did in Noach’s days, so too will He keep His promises to be compassionate to His covenant people.

#### Exposition

This haftarah is one in which God speaks tender-loving words to His wife, Israel. There is very little rebuke, if any, in this passage. Instead, this section is almost completely one of encouragement and assurance. In these verses, the Holy One refers to His people in three distinct ways. He says,

- I. Israel is the Barren One
- II. Israel is the Afflicted One
- III. Israel is the Glorified One

In this excerpt from Haftarat Noach, we will focus on the section III, Israel is the Glorified One.

### **III. Israel is the Glorified One** (Isaiah 55:1-5)

In this, our final section of Scripture from this haftarah portion, see Israel not as the barren one, nor as the afflicted one, but as the glorified one, as Isaiah 55:5 indicates. Thus, this passage sees its fulfillment in the Messianic Age. At that time, all of the nations of the world are invited to come to Israel and to partake of the abundance of her spiritual food.

However, we may also see some of the plea of these verses in the present tense — to the people of Isaiah’s day. If they would come to the Lord and imbibe His Words, great blessing would be in store for them.

Many commentators see a universal tone to this great invitation of 55:1: “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters!” I also agree. However, this broad invitation must be understood in light of the great promises God just made to Israel in chapter 54. Since God promises to restore Israel, He can indeed, invite the peoples of the nations to Israel when they are totally restored and the Messiah is on the throne in Jerusalem.

#### **A. The Living Waters**

The invitation in Isaiah 55:1 is a call for all to drink of the Word of God. Here the word “waters” seems to be a metaphor for the Word of God. Rabbi Rosenberg writes along these lines when he says,

This verse is the basis of the Talmudic maxim, “Water means nothing but Torah” (Baba Kamma 17a and 82a). He continues to suggest that this verse refers to a time in the Messianic Age when peoples from all the nations . . . will recognize that God alone rules...they will come to Jerusalem to learn His judgments and statutes...He calls them to learn Torah and wisdom.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the Talmud explains that the Torah is compared to three kinds of drinks: wine, water, and milk. Rosenberg explains that,

just as water flows from a high place to a low place, so are the words of Torah preserved only in one of humble spirit. Just as wine and milk can be kept only in the basest of vessels, so can the words of Torah be kept only in one of humble spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Buksbazen has, in my opinion, an even better explanation for the images mentioned in verse one. He says that the word of God is compared to water, wine, milk, and bread. It is like *water* because without water, life is impossible. Water is essential to life. It is like wine because in the lands of the Bible, wine was frequently used to nourish and to strengthen. (We might also add that wine is also the symbol for joy — the Word of God gives us great joy.) The Scriptures are also

compared to milk because milk is basic to growth and health. And, finally, they are likened to bread because bread is “the staff of life.”<sup>5</sup>

Given the above description of the Word of God, God’s question in verse two makes a lot of sense. Why would anyone insist on spending their money on things which do not nourish and which do not satisfy. The things that really fill man’s deepest needs are those that are found in God’s Word. The Lord says that if they would but listen carefully (note the double use of the root *shma*, שמע for emphasis), their souls would delight in fatness. In our culture, we usually have too much fat. But in the culture of the people in Isaiah’s day, fatness was something that was both a joy and a necessity for their well-being.

Isaiah uses a phrase in Isaiah 55:2 which he will continue to use in a few more chapters. He tells them that if they will listen to Him, then there would be delight for their souls. Here it is called “fatness.” But in chapter 58, they are told that if they make the Shabbat their delight then they will delight in the Lord. In all three cases, both 55:2 and in 58:13–14, the same Hebrew root is used which we translated “delight,” *oneg* (ענג).

### **B. The Testimony of David**

After making this appeal to the peoples of the earth to come, feed, and drink on His Word, the Holy one informs us that He indeed, intends to do something incredibly new with the people of God.

First He says that He will establish what is referred to as an “everlasting covenant” *brit olam*, עולם ברית. Some commentators think this “everlasting covenant” is the same as the “New Covenant” discussed in Jeremiah 31. If so, then the possibility exists that what God really intends to speak of here is a *renewing* of Israel’s covenants, rather than establishing a brand new covenant with them. This renewing would be an eternal one, so no more renewing necessary. Its sign would be the blood of the Messiah (Luke chapter 22) and it would bring center both what the Torah teaches and what He would accomplish in His death and resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

One reason that we can suggest the above interpretation is the fact that Isaiah calls upon King David as a testimony or witness to the fact that God would, indeed, keep His words of promise in this eternal covenant. The prophet seems to use the promises made to David as a means of comparing to the promises He would make in this everlasting covenant of Isaiah 55:3. This comparison is referred to by the words, “the sure mercies of David.”

The basis of God’s relating to King David is the basis upon which He would relate to all of His people, especially in this new, or renewed, covenant. How did God relate to David through mercy? First by keeping a relationship with David despite the fact that he sinned with Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband. Based on the events of that story, David should have been executed. Yet, God let him live. The second way God showed mercy to him was to make an unconditional covenant with him, as we find in 2 Samuel 7. This covenant promised David that his family

would be the ones through which kings would come to rule God's people. It also promised that there would always be someone to sit upon his throne.

Ultimately this promise to David would be fulfilled in his greatest son, Yeshua the Messiah. For we are told in 2 Samuel 7:13 that God would raise up a descendant (singular) who would build a house for him and that his kingdom would be established forever. The immediate fulfillment of this promise was in David's son, Solomon. But the ultimate fulfillment would be in the Messiah, a descendant of David.

This viewpoint is also expressed by Peter in Acts 2:29–31. Isaiah 55:4 indicates that David would be appointed as a witness and a commander for the peoples. Since by Isaiah's time, David was dead, the reference here could only be that of David's greatest son, Yeshua, the Messiah. Just as God would keep His promise to King David to bring the Messiah to rule and command the people, so also would He keep His promises to Israel to restore them, feed them with His Word, and enable them to fulfill their calling from Him.

By the way, notice that by calling David a witness and commander/ruler, "the prophet Isaiah merges the two images of the Messiah into one, that of Servant and King" (Isaiah 11:10). Even the respected Jewish commentator, David Kimchi (160–1235), sees the Messiah in Isaiah 55:4.<sup>7</sup>

### **C. Still Others**

Isaiah indicates something else which would characterize the future Israel. In Isaiah 55:5, the prophet tells us three important and unique things about this future Israel. First, he tells us that others will be drawn to them. This "nation" is the sum total of all of those who would believe in Israel's Servant/King, Messiah Yeshua. Through Him Paul says, the believing remnant of the nations would be "grafted in" to Israel and made to be fellow citizens, fellow partakers of the Covenants, and fellow-participants in Israel's inheritance (Romans 11, and Ephesians 2–3).

Second, Isaiah tells us the reason why the nations would be attracted to Israel. He says that it would be because of Israel's God, the Holy One. They would finally see the beauty of what it is like for a nation to be ruled and taught by a loving and gracious God. God would make it that way in Israel. This corresponds with what the prophet Zechariah says in Zechariah 8:23, "In those days ten people from all (each) of the nations will grasp the garment of the Jew saying, "Let us go with you, for we heard that God is with you."

Finally, we learn that there will come a day when God will glorify His people, Israel. In those days, Israel will not be known as the barren one, nor as the afflicted one. Instead, because of the presence of Messiah, she will be known the world over as the glorious one. And, truly, peoples from every nation will have a burning desire to know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because of His mighty works on the earth and among His chosen people.

---

<sup>1</sup> Allen A. MacRae, *Studies in Isaiah*, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> I. W. Slotki, *Isaiah* (Soncino Series), p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> A.J. Rosenberg, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 2, p. 436.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, p. 430.

<sup>6</sup> For a good discussion of the nature of the new (“renewed”) covenant, read pages 231–235 of *Toward an Old Testament Theology* by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

<sup>7</sup> Slotki, *op. cit.*, p. 270.