

### Introduction

On this Shabbat, the sixth after Tisha b'Av, the prophecy continues the *sheva de-nechamta*, the "seven [haftarot] of consolation." One more will follow, which will be recited on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah. (See the Introduction to the haftarah for Va'et-chanan).

#### Connection of haftarah and Shabbat:

Consolation is the main thrust of the haftarah, as is expected during the seven Shabbatot before Rosh Hashanah. But it is doubly relevant as a counterweight to the sidra, which contains the dreaded catalogue of evils that will befall Israel if it fails to observe God's law. The haftarah lifts the gloom with a depiction of Israel's future glory.

#### The setting:

The Second Isaiah, the author of this prophecy, lived among his people in Babylonian exile (6th century B.C.E.). The exiles were suffering grievously; poverty and despair were their daily diet. Isaiah depicted for them a future marked by fabulous well-being, wealth, and happiness—a startling contrast to the reality the people were experiencing.

For more on Isaiah and his time, see our *General Introduction*.

#### The message:

1. An introduction sets forth the theme: Today may be dark, but tomorrow God's light will shine on Israel. (60:1-2)
2. A description of the glorious future the people may expect. (3-20)
3. Summation: All this will come to pass in due time, and when it does, God will hasten its fulfillment. (21-22)

## HAFTARAH FOR KI TAVO

Isaiah, chapter 60, verses 1 to 22

60:1. Arise, shine, [O Jerusalem,]  
for your light has come, the glory of the  
Eternal is shining upon you!  
2. Though darkness may cover the earth,  
thick darkness [the] peoples—  
upon you the Eternal will shine,  
over you God's Presence will appear.  
3. Nations shall walk toward your light,  
and kings toward your sunrise.  
4. Raise your eyes and see!  
They are gathering, all of them,  
they are coming to you.  
Your sons shall come from afar,  
your daughters borne securely.  
5. You shall see it and beam with joy,  
your heart will thrill with pride,  
the sea's abundance shall shower you,  
the wealth of nations shall come your way.

### Commentary

1. *Arise, shine.* This verse is quoted in the Shabbat hymn *L'chah Dodi*, which uses other verses from Isaiah as well (see pp. 474, 479). The Hebrew uses the feminine gender for the one who is addressed. Clearly, that is Jerusalem, which is always spoken of as "she." The expression "Rise and shine!" comes from this verse.

*The glory.* Its radiance was considered an aspect of the Divine—even as in ancient Near East tradition it was connected with deities and royal personages. (The glow of Moses' face and the saintly halo of Christian depiction represent the divine quality of luminosity.<sup>2</sup>)

2. That God's light shines only for Israel recalls the description of the plague of darkness.<sup>3</sup>

60:1 קוּמִי אוֹרִי  
כִּי בָא אוֹרְךָ וּבְכוֹד יְהוָה עָלֶיךָ זָרַח:  
2 כִּי הִגְהָה חוֹשֶׁךְ יַכְסֶה אֶרֶץ  
וְעָרְפֵל לְאֻמִּים  
וְעָלֶיךָ יִזְרַח יְהוָה  
וּבְכוֹדוֹ עָלֶיךָ יִרְאֶה:  
3 וְהִלְכוּ גוֹיִם לְאוֹרְךָ  
וּמְלָכִים לְנֹגַהּ זָרְחֶךָ:  
4 שְׂאֵי סְבִיב עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאִי  
כָלֵם וּקְבָצוּ  
בְאוֹרְךָ  
בְנֵיךָ מִרְחֹק יָבֹאוּ  
וּבְנֹתֶיךָ עַל-צֵד תֵּאֱמָנָה:  
5 אֲנִי תִרְאִי וְנִחַרְתְּ  
וּפָתַח וּרְחֹב לְכַבֵּד  
כִּי-יִהְיֶהפֶד עָלֶיךָ תִּמְוֹן יָם  
תִּיל גוֹיִם יָבֹאוּ לְךָ:

6. A horde of camels shall cover your land,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah,  
all coming from Sheba

bearing gold and frankincense;  
proclaiming the praises of God!

7. The flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to  
you,

the rams of Nevayot shall serve your  
need—

a sacrifice welcome on My altar,  
adding glory to My glorious house.

8. Who are these that fly like a cloud,  
like doves to their cotes?

6 שְׁפֵעַת גְּמָלִים תִּכְסֹּךְ

בְּכָרֵי מִדְיָן וְעִפְחָה

כָּלֵם מִשֶּׁבַּא יָבֹאוּ

וְהָב וּלְבוֹנָה יִשְׂאוּ

וּתְהַלֵּל יְהוָה יְבִשְׂרוּ:

7 כָּל־צֹאן קֵדָר יִקְבְּצוּ לָךְ

אֵילֵי נְבִיֹת יִשְׂרָתוּנְךָ

יַעֲלֶוּ עַל־רִצּוֹן מִזְבְּחִי

וּבֵית הַתְּפִאֲרֹתַי אֲפָאֵר:

8 מִי־אֵלֶּה כְּעָב תַּעֲוִפִינָה

וּכִי־נֹתִים אֶל־אַרְבַּתֵּיהֶם:

### Commentary

6. This verse begins an extravagant enumeration of the material wealth that will come Israel's way. Isaiah draws this picture as a dreamlike contrast to the misery of the day.

*Midian.* Referring not to a specific area but to a nomadic tribe or confederation of five tribes frequenting the Sinai peninsula, the southern Negev, and probably Arabia as well. Archaeological evidence of excavation in the Northern Hejaz (east of the Gulf of Aqaba) reveals a highly sophisticated civilization that may have been created by the Midianites. The Torah traces their origin to Abraham's marriage to Keturah.<sup>4</sup> The word "Midianites" was often used as a synonym for "traders."<sup>5</sup>

*Ephah.* Noted in Genesis as a descendant of Midian. Probably the name of a similar tribe.<sup>6</sup>

*Sheba.* A kingdom made famous by its wealth and by the queen who visited Solomon.<sup>7</sup> Though Josephus connected the nation with Ethiopia,<sup>8</sup> it was probably located in Arabia, and possibly identified with Saba in the southwest corner of the peninsula. It had an advanced culture in the early part of the first millennium B.C.E., and Ezekiel knew it as a source of gold and gems.<sup>9</sup>

*Frankincense.* An aromatic gum resin.

7. *Kedar ... Nevayot.* Nomadic tribes, probably in Arabia, for both names are mentioned in Genesis as the firstborn and second sons of Ishmael, who was considered the ancestor of the Arabs.<sup>10</sup> Kedar and Nevayot are also noted in Assyrian records of the time.

9. The coastlands' vessels wait for Me,  
the ships of Tarshish in the lead,  
to bring your children from afar,  
along with their silver and gold,  
to please the Eternal your God,  
the Holy One of Israel,  
who has given you glory.

10. Foreigners shall rebuild your walls,  
and their kings shall serve you.  
For in anger I struck you down,  
but in favor I show you love [again].

11. Your gates shall be open always,  
day or night they shall not be shut,  
to bring in the wealth of nations,  
their kings led as in procession.

12. Nations and kingdoms that refuse to  
serve you shall vanish,  
their people utterly destroyed.

9 כִּי־לִי אֲנִים יִקְוּ  
וְאֲנִיֹּת תַּרְשִׁישׁ בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה  
לְהָבִיא בְּנֵיךְ מֵרְחוֹק  
כֶּסֶפָם וְזָהָבָם אִתָּם  
לְשֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
וְלִקְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
כִּי פָאֲרָד:

10 וּבְנֵי בְנֵי־נֹכַח חֹמֹתֶיךָ  
וּמְלָכֵיהֶם יִשְׁרָתוּנֶיךָ  
כִּי בְּקֶצֶפִי הִכִּיתִיךָ  
וּבְרַצוֹנִי רַחֲמִיתִיךָ:

11 וּפְתוּחוּ שַׁעְרֶיךָ תָמִיד  
יּוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵה לֹא יִסָּגְרוּ  
לְהָבִיא אֵלֶיךָ תֵּיל גּוֹיִם  
וּמְלָכֵיהֶם נְהוּגִים:

12 כִּי־הִנּוּי וְהַמְּלָכָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעֲבֹדוּךָ  
יֵאָבְדוּ  
וְהַגּוֹיִם חָרַב יִחָרְבוּ:

### Commentary

9. *Ships of Tarshish*. A seaport of unknown location, probably far away from Israel—possibly the port of Tartessus in Spain. When Jonah fled from God's command to preach to Nineveh he took a ship from Jaffa to Tarshish.<sup>11</sup> The Torah lists Tarshish as a son of Javan, who is the mythic ancestor of the Greeks.<sup>12</sup>

11. *Your gates shall be open always*. There will be no danger in leaving them open, for the threat of war will have disappeared.<sup>13</sup>

*The wealth of nations*. Adam Smith used these words for (part of) the title of his principal work.<sup>14</sup>

*Their kings led*. Understood by many as "brought in chains."<sup>15</sup>

13. The pride of Lebanon shall come to you—

juniper, box-tree, and cypress together,  
to beautify the place of My sanctuary,  
to glorify the place where I rest.

14. They shall come bowing before you—  
the children of those who oppressed you;  
they shall bow down at the soles of your  
feet,

all those who despised you.

They shall call you the City of God,  
Zion, [abode] of Israel's Holy One.

15. As once you were abandoned and  
hated,

with no one passing through,  
so now I make you a pride forever,  
the joy of all generations.

16. You shall suck the milk of nations,  
suck the breast of kingdoms,  
and you shall know that I, the Eternal, am  
your Savior,  
your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

### Commentary

13. *Pride of Lebanon*. A reference to cedars, which were also used to build the first Temple.<sup>16</sup>

The mention of valuable wood to be used in the new Temple is influenced by the Assyrian tradition (encapsulated in royal inscriptions) of enumerating trees brought as tribute to Assyrian kings.<sup>17</sup>

*Where I rest*. Literally, where My feet rest—a metaphor used in various ways. Here, it probably means (parallel to the preceding line) the Holy of Holies in the Temple.<sup>18</sup>

13 כבוד הלבנון אליך יבוא

ברוש תדרדר ותאשור יחדו

לפאר מקום מקדשי

ומקום רגלי אכבד:

14 והלכו אליך שחוח

בני מעויןך

והשתחוו על כפות רגליך

כל־מנאציך

ויראו לך עיר יהיה

ציון קדוש ישראל:

15 תחת היותך עזובה ושנואה

ואין עובר

ושמתוך לגאון עולם

משוש דור ודור:

16 וינקת חלב גוים

ושד מלכים תינקי

וידעת כי אני יהוה מושיעך

וגאלך אביר יעקב:

17. Instead of copper I will bring gold,  
instead of iron, silver,  
instead of wood, copper,  
and iron instead of stones.  
I will make Peace your government,  
and Righteousness your rulers.

18. No more shall [the noise of] violence  
be heard in your land,  
desolation and destruction within your  
borders.

You shall name your walls *Deliverance*,  
and your gates *Praise*.

19. No more shall the sun be your light by  
day,  
nor shall the moon's glow brighten [your  
night];  
the Eternal will be your everlasting light,  
and your God [will be] your glory.

20. No more shall your sun go down,  
or your moon disappear;  
for the Eternal will be your everlasting  
light,  
and your days of mourning shall be ended.

21. Your people shall be righteous, all of  
them,  
and possess the land forever:

### Commentary

20. *Your everlasting light.* The prophecy begins and ends with light from the Eternal shining on Israel.

21. *Possess the land forever.* When the reason for Israel's losing the land, because of sinfulness falls away, it will never be lost again. In the Mishnah, this verse is cited as proof text that "all Israel have a share (that is, a holding) in the world-to-come."<sup>19</sup>

17 פתח הנחשת אביא זהב

ותחת הברזל אביא כסף

ותחת העצים נחשת

ותחת האבנים ברזל

ושמתי פקדונך שלום

ונשיד צדקה:

18 לא ישמע עוד חמס בארצך

שד ושבר בגבולך

וקראת ישועה חומתך

ושערך תהלה:

19 לא יהיה לך עוד השמש לאור יומם

וללנה הירח לא יאיר לך

והיה לך יהוה לאור עולם

ואלהיך לתפארתך:

20 לא יבוא עוד שמשך

וירחך לא יאסף

כי יהוה יהיה לך לאור עולם

ושלמו ימי אבךך:

21 ועמך כלם צדיקים

לעולם ירשו ארץ

they are the shoot that I have planted,  
the work of My hands,  
to display My glory.

נֶצֶר מִשְׁעוֹ [מִטְעִי]

מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי

לְהַתְּפָאֵר:

22. The least of them shall become a thou-  
sand,

22 חֲקֹטָן יִהְיֶה לְאַלְפָּה

and the smallest a mighty nation;

וְהַצְעִיר לְגוֹי עַצוֹם

I, the Eternal, will hasten it

אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּעֵתָהּ אַחֲשֶׁנָּה:

when the time has come.

## Essay

### *When is the time of Deliverance?*

Our haftarah concludes with the enigmatic verse 22. Referring to the time when all the magnificent events described in the prophecy will take place, it says:

*I, the Eternal, will hasten it  
when the time has come.*

One could easily understand it if God would say only "Deliverance is on its way and I will make sure there is no delay. Therefore I will hasten it."

But Isaiah does not say this of God. Rather, there seems to be a qualification: Yes, it will happen according to the promise, but only "when its time has come." Will the Deliverance be hastened, or will God wait for the right time? And does the right time depend only on God's pleasure or also on human readiness?

Various attempts have been made by biblical commentators to elucidate the passage.

Radak says: Once the time has come, God will hasten Deliverance to its speedy completion.

Rashi, basing himself on the talmudic explanation,<sup>20</sup> separates the two expressions as follows: If Israel is deserving, I will hasten it; if it is not, it will happen when its time has come.

In this latter explanation, גְּאוּלָּה (ge'ullah, Deliverance or Redemption) depends on Israel's performance of God's will. This opinion became the predominant view of our Rabbis, and is often voiced today as well.

Some contemporary Jews, chief among them the Chasidim who professed (and profess) allegiance to the Rebbe of Lubavitch, see the signs of Redemption multiply: the return of Jews to their homeland; the defeat of fascism and the breakdown of communism, and other events suddenly changing the course of history. They hope that the Messiah may reveal himself now; the time has come, and so they pray that God may hasten the Deliverance.

Many other Jews too are gripped by the thought that, precisely because the world seems upside down, with violence and war taking center stage, with refugees roaming the continents, Redemption must be near. For tradition says that these cataclysmic events are its harbingers, "the birth pangs of the Messiah." Israel has already experienced the utmost in misery (the Holocaust), and the rest of the world goes through the trauma of terrible suffering. Now God *must* decide that the time has come, decide to put an end to it all.

Liberal Jews generally forswear such beliefs. They no longer hope for a personal Messiah from the House of David; rather, they look to a gradual evolution of humanity toward universal amity and peace. This they call the messianic age, which is unlikely to arrive in the lifetime of anyone alive today. It is a goal toward which we strive, without expecting fulfillment in any foreseeable historic period.



Do the people of Israel have a role to play in this slow advance? We believe they do. They are still the People of God and have a task to bring Redemption nearer—if only in a small and perhaps invisible measure. But God will know.<sup>21</sup>

None of this definitively illumines verse 22. In fact, it cannot be otherwise. Deliverance is partly in God's and partly in humanity's realm. It is a fluid rather than a fixed relationship, and we know not the future trek of history, nor can we plumb the mind of the Eternal. But this ignorance does not mean that our striving is in vain. We labor in God's vineyard as if Deliverance is in our hands, and we leave the rest to God. That is how the vision of Isaiah can speak to us in our day.<sup>22</sup>