YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**Understanding the haftarot**

**By Harav Yaakov Medan**

**The *Haftara* for *Parashat Re'eh***

**(The Third of the Seven *Haftarot* of Consolation)**

Oppressed and storm swept, never comforted; behold: I am paving your ground with garnet, lapis lazuli your foundations. I am fitting your windows with rubies, your gates with glowing granite, marking your borders with stones men covet. All your children will be students of the Lord, and great will be your children's peace. On righteousness will you be founded; stay far from oppression; you will not fear, and terror will never come near you. No strife can arise without My assent; who among you fears one who could come upon you? For I create the craftsman who blows the charcoal fire and brings forth the tools of his trade; I create also the destroyer to do harm. No weapon made to harm you can prevail; any tongue that calls you into judgment, you will prove its fault. This is the birthright of the Lord's servants, for their innocence is Mine; so says the Lord. You who are thirsty, all, come to water; you who have no silver, come, take food and eat; come and take food without silver, wine and milk without cost, for why should you weigh out your silver for no bread, your labor bringing you no fullness? Listen – listen to Me: let goodness nourish you, and let your souls delight in plenty. Turn your ear to Me and come; listen, that your souls may live; let Me forge an everlasting covenant with you, like David's faithful promises, for I make him a witness to nations, a leader, a ruler of nations; for you shall call out, call, to a people you know not, and a people who know you not will come running out to you for the sake of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your glory. (*Yeshayahu* 54:11-55:5)[[1]](#footnote-1)

This *haftara*, the third of the seven *haftarot* of consolation from the book of *Yeshayahu*, is also part of the *haftara* for *Parashat Noach*, thus we already examined itin the framework of the book of *Bereishit*. For this week, we will review only the main points of that study.

The first part of the *haftara* for *Parashat Noach* (which is also the *haftara* for *Parashat Ki Tetze*, the fifth *haftara* of consolation) describes the return of exiled daughter of Zion to her house, in the form of the tabernacle and tent of meeting:

Broaden the site of your **tent**; stretch out your canvas **tabernacle**; do not hold back; lengthen your tent cords, and strengthen its pegs. (*Yeshayahu* 54:2)

Here, Zion is building her home by herself,[[2]](#footnote-2) preparing for the arrival of a woman who will live with her. In our *haftara*,the tabernacle [*mishkan*, a temporary dwelling] transforms into a temple paved with precious stones, located in a fortified city – like God's Temple in Jerusalem:[[3]](#footnote-3)

Behold: I am paving your ground with garnet, lapis lazuli your foundations. I am fitting your windows with rubies, your gates with glowing granite. (54:12)

God Himself builds the Temple for his wife, and her sons help him:

"All your children will be students of the Lord, and great will be the peace of your children [*banayikh*]" (*Yeshayahu* 54:13). Rabbi Eliezer said in the name of Rabbi Chanina… Read not *banayikh* [your children], but rather *bonayikh* [your builders]. (*Berakhot* 64a)[[4]](#footnote-4)

The prophet conditions the building of the Temple in Jerusalem on the return of the kingdom of the house of David:

Listen – listen to Me: let goodness nourish you, and let your souls delight in plenty. Turn your ear to Me and come; listen, that your souls may live; let Me forge an everlasting covenant with you, like David's faithful promises. (55:2-3)

To be sure, this is what Natan the prophet told David, when he wanted to make a house for the *Shekhina* instead of a tent:

The king said to the prophet Natan, "Look now – I am dwelling in a cedarwood palace while the Ark of God is dwelling in a tent."… The word of the Lord came to Natan. "Go, and say to My servant David: Thus says the Lord: Shall you be the one to build a house for Me, for My abode? For I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites out of Egypt to this day; I have roamed in tent and tabernacle… Moreover, the Lord declares that the Lord will establish a house for you. For when your days are done and you lie with your ancestors, I will raise up your own seed after you – the issue of your own loins – and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house in My name, and I will firmly establish his royal throne forever. (II *Shmuel* 7:2-13)

Yeshayahu says the covenant with David will be re-established when Israel once again listens to the voice of the Lord their God.

The prophet also says about the descendant of David who will one day reign in Jerusalem, the city of the Temple and the redemption, that he will be "a leader, a ruler of nations" – that is, like his ancestor David, who ruled over all the nations around the Land of Israel, he too will reign over many nations. David inspired fear in the surrounding nations, so that they dare not attack Israel. His son will rule them for another reason:

For I make him a witness to nations, a leader, a ruler of nations; for you shall call out, call, to a people you know not, and a people who know you not will come running out to you for the sake of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your glory. (55:4-5)

The nations will run to the king of Israel "for the sake of the Lord your God." That is to say, as we will see further in our discussion of the next haftara, they will come to the Temple to learn the ways of God – “because from Zion will come the Torah and the word of God from Jerusalem” (*Yeshayahu* 2:3).

)Translated by David Strauss)

1. Unless specified otherwise, all Biblical references are to the book of *Yeshayahu*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Like Yael the wife of Chever (*Shoftim* 4), who held onto the tent pegs and the mallet with which to hammer them into the ground. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In this respect (in the spirit of midrashic exposition), the *haftara* also fits the *parasha*, *Parashat Re'eh*, which mentions “the place that God will choose” and the building of a Temple for Him there. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The replacement of *banayikh* with *bonayikh* is not based only on the similarity of the words. According to the plain understanding, the verse indeed speaks of builders, who build with the rubies, granite, and coveted stones mentioned in the previous verse. The connection brought in the *midrash* between Torah scholars and peace in the world is not necessarily connected to this derivation; it stems from the fact that the sons in this prophecy are "students of the Lord" – that is, students of Torah, Torah scholars – and their peace is great. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)