

The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash

Themes and Ideas in the Haftara
Yeshivat Har Etzion

**This haftara series is dedicated in memory
of our beloved Chaya Leah bat Efrayim Yitzchak
(Mrs. Claire Reinitz), zichronah livracha,
by her family.**

**This shiur is dedicated in memory of
Dr. William Major z"l.**

PARASHAT KI TAVO

Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein

One of the principles that we have emphasized in the framework of our *shiurim* on the seven *haftarot* of consolation is *Tosafot's* statement in *Megila* (31b, s.v. *Rosh Chodesh*): "It is the way of consolations to be increasingly consoling." This position forces us to see the two *haftarot* remaining in the series as prophesying about grand acts of deliverance and consolation. And, in fact, the *haftara* for *Parashat Ki Tavo*, "*Kumi ori*" (*Yeshayahu* 60:1-22) does not disappoint us; it promises Israel full and uplifting redemption.

THE SHINING OF GOD'S GLORY – A CHANGE IN THE NATURAL ORDER

The consolation offered in our *haftara* does not promise rest from the troubles of exile and a cessation of Israel's afflictions. Nor does it promise political-spiritual success in the historical framework familiar to us. Rather, it is a vision of the redemption that will take place in the end of days, when the natural order of the world will change and the material and spiritual worlds will once again become a monistic reality, where spirit rules over matter and dictates reality.^{1[1]}

This point is emphasized already at the beginning of the *haftara*, and it accompanies the prophetic vision throughout the chapter. The prophet opens with a declaration that speaks of the Divine glory that will reveal itself to man and illuminate his path:

Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you. (*Yeshayahu* 60:1-2)

The replacement of the natural illumination of the created world with Divine-spiritual light is a clear expression of the breaching of the boundaries between the world of the spirit and the world of nature, boundaries that exist in the natural world familiar to us. This change is one of the harbingers of the coming of the messiah and the end of days. As a rule, the cancellation of the natural order and its replacement with spiritual providence depends upon an exceedingly high spiritual level – whether with respect to unique individuals who merit personal providence in this world, or with respect to the nation as a whole in the future. It happens when God actively intervenes in the world and does not allow the natural order that He Himself had established to govern.^{2[2]} In our *haftara*, this testifies to the elevated level that Israel will reach

1[1] Needless to say, I will not deal in this framework with the metaphysical issues connected to the question of the relationship between matter and spirit and changing the natural order at the time of creation and/or in the messianic future. Our use of these terms comes in the wake of the *haftara* which speaks of the shining of the glory of God, whether as parable and metaphor or in the literal sense.

2[2] The Ramban describes unique individuals across the generations, whose souls conjoin with God with particular intensity, as subject to a unique providence that removes them from the ordinary human order. This point is emphasized by him in his discussion of Avraham, where he notes that also the Rambam shares this view (though in the framework of different metaphysical assumptions regarding the nature of providence):

"The correct interpretation appears to me to be that the word *yedativ* literally means 'knowing.' He is thus alluding that God's knowledge, which is synonymous with His providence in the lower world, is to guard the species, and even the children of men are subject despite it to the circumstantial evil occurrences until the time of their visitation comes. But, as regards His pious, He directs His providence to know each one individually so that His watch constantly attaches to

at that time, for the shining of God's glory in place of natural light will follow from their closeness to God and their spiritual attainment. In this context, we should note the famous midrash that speaks of the light that was hidden away during the six days of creation to be used by the righteous in the future:

For Rabbi Eliezer said: The light which the Holy One, blessed be He, created on the first day, one could see thereby from one end of the world to the other; but as soon as the Holy One, blessed be He, beheld the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Dispersion, and saw that their actions were corrupt, He arose and hid it from them, as it is said: "But from the wicked their light is withheld" (*Iyyov* 38:15). And for whom did He reserve it? For the righteous in the time to come. As it is said: "And God saw the light that it was good" (*Bereishit* 1:4); and "good" means only the righteous, for it is said: "Say you of the righteous that he is good" (*Yeshayahu* 3:10). As soon as He saw the light that He had reserved for the righteous, He rejoiced, as it is said: "He rejoices at the light of the righteous" (*Mishlei* 13:9). (*Chagiga* 12a)

The concealment of the primal light was not merely a punishment for the sins that would be committed in the future; rather, it gave expression to a change in approach and governance. The primal light was not subject to the natural order, but rather it was light that stemmed from the *Shekhina's* presence in the world, and therefore it was effected by sin and designated exclusively for the righteous. Its concealment on account of future sins indicates that we are not dealing here with punishment, for punishment is not meted out for sins that have yet to be committed. Rather, it reflects the understanding that already from the beginning of creation, there was a pure, spiritual world that demanded closeness to God, and therefore the decision was made to transfer the governance of the world from the track of matter directly influenced by the spirit to one that operates according to the laws of nature. The possibility of returning to spiritual governance that cancels and replaces natural law may have been raised at the time of the revelation at Mount Sinai, but this attempt was spoiled by the sin of the golden calf. This is the meaning of the obscure verse that speaks of "putting off your ornaments from

him, His knowledge and remembrance of him never departs, as it says: 'He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous' (*Iyyov* 27:7). There are many verses on this theme, as it is written: 'Behold, the eye of the Lord is toward them that fear Him' (*Tehilim* 33:18), and other verses."

The Ramban expands upon this idea in his commentary to *Iyyov* 36:7:

"For this reason He watches over the righteous, for just as their hearts and eyes are upon Him at all times, so too the eyes of the God are upon them from the beginning of the year to its end, to the extent that the absolutely pious man who cleaves at all times to God, that conjunction being maintained even when he thinks about worldly matters, will be protected at all times from all the accidents of time, even of nature, and he will be protected from them by way of a miracle that will continually be performed for him."

you" (*Shemot* 33:5) and the verse that describes its execution, "And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Chorev" (v. 6), that are found in the framework of the discussion between Moshe and God, what is better – direct Divine governance (= the world of nature/history being subjugated to spiritual governance and nullified by it), or governance by way of an angel who will guide Israel as God's agent (= a world with natural laws and Divine providence within the framework of the natural world). In any event, Moshe Rabbenu merited at that time that his face shined from the Divine light that accompanied him, but he was forced to cover his face with a veil. This was because the world in its natural state was incapable of bearing such an elevated connection to the presence of the *Shekhina* in the framework of the natural order. But a promise was given that that same light would reappear in the future and shine for the righteous in that same world after it would be repaired and elevated.

The idea that a spiritual light will appear in the future and illuminate the world with light breaking forth from the presence of the *Shekhina*, and not from natural forces - that finds expression in the midrash about God's hiding of the primal light - is taken from our verses. It is not the light of the sun that will shine upon Israel, but rather the glory of God. The light shining upon Israel is not the light of the sun, but rather the glory of God – "Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you" (60:1). And therefore the ordinary atmospheric processes that dictate light and darkness will not effect it – "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you" (60:2). The earth (= nature) and the peoples (= the natural providence in the world) are influenced by darkness, but it is God who will shine upon you, and His glory that will give light. This motif with which the *haftara* opens appears again at the end of the *haftara*:

The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the Lord shall be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no more go down; nor shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever; they shall be the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. (60:19-21)

As we can see, it is emphatically repeated that the natural meteorological system will be replaced by spiritual governance that will illuminate the world with Divine glory, as was stated already in the opening verses of the *haftara*. Thus, the passage opens and closes on a similar note, creating a literary framework that delimits the entire prophecy within that framework.

FUTURE REDEMPTION

As stated above, governance that subjugates the natural world to spiritual reality can only be found in a world that is found in close and intimate contact with the Creator, namely, in the world of the righteous. Therefore, when the prophet prophesies that this will apply in the future to the entire nation, he adds the stipulation that the people will be at a high spiritual level. Thus, he adds in this connection, "Your people shall be all righteous," and that they will be the glory of creation, "the work of My hands, that I may be glorified."

The midrashim in fact see our chapter and the promises contained therein as relating to the messianic period. Thus, we find in *Yalkut Shim'oni* (ad loc., 499):

Our Rabbis taught: When the messianic king will arrive, he will stand on the roof of the Temple and proclaim before Israel: "Afflicted ones, the time of your redemption has arrived. And if you do not believe me, see my light that shines upon you, as it is stated: 'Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.' It shines upon you alone, and not on idol worshippers, as it is stated: 'For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth.'" At that time, the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause the light of the messianic king and of Israel to shine.

The midrash also notes the correspondence between the elevated spiritual reality of the past, when Israel dwelt under the wings of the *Shekhina* and were removed from the natural order, and the prophetic promise regarding the future found in our chapter (ibid. 503):

"The sun shall be no more your light by day." Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said: All forty years that [the people of] Israel were in the wilderness, nobody needed the light of the sun by day or the light of the moon by night. Rather, when the clouds shined, they knew that the sun had set, and when they turned white, they knew that sun had risen. One would look at a barrel and know what was inside, [or look] at a pitcher and know what was inside, because of the cloud of the *Shekhina* that was in their midst, as it is stated: "In sight of all of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (*Shemot* 40:38). So too in the future, as it is stated: "Arise, shine; for your light is come." And it is stated: "The sun shall be no more your light by day." And it is stated: "Your sun shall no more go down."

Anyone who examines *Yalkut Shim'oni* (ad loc.) will find many midrashim dealing with the messianic days, hanging them on verses in our *haftara*, too many to cite them all here. In light of what we have seen above, it is absolutely clear why the midrash assigns this chapter specifically to the messianic period, and what the role of this chapter is in the framework of the *haftarot* of consolation.

A REVERSAL OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

Now that we have examined the opening and closing verses of the *haftara*, let us consider the rest of the prophecy. As a whole, we can describe what is stated in the intervening verses as a total reversal in the relationship between Israel and the nations. Israel, who had been weak, few in number and wretched, will enjoy an ingathering of its exiles, and the nations will stream to them, offering bounty, glory and assistance. The nations will also recognize God and His kingship and sing His praises. The verses expand upon these ideas in rich and poetic language:

Lift up your eyes around about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you will see, and be filled with light, and your heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance from the sea shall be turned to you, the riches of the nations shall come to you. The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midyan and Efa; all they from Sheva shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together to you, the rams of Nevayot shall minister to you: they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory. What are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them, to the name of the Lord your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you: for in My wrath I smote you, but in My favor have I had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night; that men may bring to you the riches of the nations, and their kings with their train. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the maple, and the box tree, together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted you shall come bending to you; and all they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you, the City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also suck the milk of the nations, and shall suck the breast of kings: and you shall know that I the Lord shall save you, and the mighty One of Ya'akov shall redeem you. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make your officers peace, and your taskmasters, righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. (60:4-18)

We are dealing here with a radical upheaval – "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." However, we are not dealing merely with an improvement in Israel's state, but in a change in the natural order in a deeper sense. The nations will serve the people of Israel not only to repair the injustice committed during the period of their exile. Their conduct will reflect a new and different definition of their role and status in history. They will not only free Israel from exile and allow for an ingathering of the exiles, each nation going off on its own as an independent national entity, but rather they will become subject to Israel and put in their service.

It seems that this must be understood in light of what was stated above. In the historical reality familiar to us in the pre-messianic period, the demand placed upon the nations is that they not harm Israel or rejoice in their troubles. But there is no expectation that "the sons of strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you: for in My wrath I smote you, but in My favor have I had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night; that men may bring to you the riches of the nations, and their kings with their train. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." Each nation has its own historical reality. A situation in which all the nations stream to Jerusalem and subordinate all their actions to its rebuilding, reflects the change that will take place in the end of days, and therefore it appears in our *haftara*. In a world in which the light is not the light of the sun, but rather the glory of God, and the natural order is entirely different from that which is familiar to us, the historical world will also change in the same manner. It too will be entirely different from that with which we are familiar in our world. We can see the correspondence between the change in the natural order and the change in the historical situation in the following verses:

Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.

The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the Lord shall be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory.

Your sun shall no more go down; nor shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.

As we can see the prophet creates a correspondence between these three verses, each one opening with a similar wording: "...shall no more be heard...", "... shall be no more your light...", "...shall no more go down." This succession of verses describes the change that will take place and God's intervention in Israel's world in the aftermath of that change. This series of verses includes a verse that deals with the historical change that will take place and the

historical reality that will follow in its wake, in the same way that it has a verse that relates to the change in the natural order and the new situation that will be created. This teaches us that the two changes are of similar nature; just as the one depends on a transition from natural governance and ordinary providence in the physical world to a messianic spiritual reality, so too the other depends on a transition from historical governance and ordinary providence on the political level to the historical reality of the end of days.

THE FUTURE REDEMPTION IN OUR *HAFTARAH* ACCORDING TO THE MIDRASH

Indeed, the midrash (*Yalkut Shim'oni* 499-501) also assigns the verses in our chapter that deal with the nations to God's appearance at the end of days and to the historical changes that will take place in the future during the messianic period:

"And the nations shall walk in your light." Rabba bar bar Chana said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: In the future the Holy One, blessed be He, will build a booth for the righteous from the hide of the leviathan... and the rest will be spread out by the Holy One, blessed be He, over the walls of Jerusalem, and their light will shine from one end of the world to the other. As it is stated: "And the nations shall walk in your light." Jerusalem is the light of the world, as it is stated: "And the nations shall walk in your light." And who is the light of Jerusalem? The Holy One, blessed be He, as it is stated: "For the Lord shall be your everlasting light."

Similarly, the midrash adds as follows:

Rav Hoshaya said: In the future Jerusalem will serve as a torch for the nations of the world, and they will walk in its light. What is the reason? "And the nations shall walk in your light." And so too the verse states: "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established" (*Yeshayahu* 2:2). This is what the verse says: "For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light" (*Tehilim* 36:10). The people of Israel said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, because of the Torah which You gave me and is called "the fountain of life," I will in the future delight in Your light. What is [the meaning of] "in Your light we see light"? This refers to the light of the messiah, as it is stated: "And the Lord saw the light that it was good." This teaches that before the world was created, the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw the generation of the messiah and its deeds, and hid it [= the light] for the messiah and his generation under His Throne of Glory. Satan said to the Holy One, blessed be He: The light that is hidden away under your Throne of Glory – whose is it? He said to him: It belongs to him who in the future will turn you back in shame. He said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Show him to me. He said to him: Come, and see him. When he saw him, he

trembled and fell on his face, saying: He is certainly the messiah who in the future will cast me down into Gehinom along with all the officers of the idolators. At that time, the Holy One, blessed be He, will shine the light of the messianic king and of Israel, and they will all walk in the light of the messianic king and of Israel. As it is stated: "And the nations shall walk in your light, and kings at the brightness of your rising." And they will come and lick the dust under the feet of the messianic king, as it is stated: "And they will lick up the dust of your feet" (*Yeshayahu* 49:23). And they will all come and fall on their faces before the messiah and before Israel, saying: We will be servants to you and to Israel. And every member of Israel will have twenty eight hundred servants.

In conclusion, it should be noted that in light of *Chazal's* attribution of the *haftara* to the messianic period, the economic abundance described therein should also be understood in a similar manner. Indeed, a world in which "for brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron," and also the concentration of wealth and resources described in the chapter, are very suited to the period in which delicacies will be as common as dust, and all of man's thoughts will be focused on recognizing God as the light of the world.

There is no better way to close than with the concluding words of the *haftara*: "The least one shall become a thousand, and the smallest one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in its time" (60:23). May this verse be fulfilled in us speedily in our days.

(Translated by David Strauss)
