



The Haftarot recited between the 17th of Tammuz and Sukkot relate not to the weekly Torah reading, but instead to the workings of the covenant between God, His people, His Land, and humanity. After the Temple’s destruction described in the Haftarat of the “Three of Affliction” (תלת דפורענותא) and Tisha B’Av, the “Seven of Comfort” (שבע דנהמתא) comforted the exiled Jewish people, assuring their eventual glorious redemption.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the “**Two of Repentance**” (Aramaic: חרתי דתיובתא)- recited on Tzom Gedaliah (by Ashkenazim only) and Shabbat Shuva- encourage the people to repent in order to achieve the promised redemption.

Two of Repentance #1 (Tzom Gedaliah): Isaiah 55:6-56:8

Ashkenazim recite this Haftarah during mincha in accordance with their practice to recite it during mincha of every fast day (other than Yom Kippur) to encourage righteous acts and giving charity on fast day afternoons.¹ During the Ten Days of Repentance, however, this Haftarah also serves as the first of the “Two of Repentance.”² Indeed, the Talmud and Maimonides identify the time in its opening verse for individuals “to seek God while He may be found” as the “Ten Days of Repentance” between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.³

The Haftarah is one of the prophecies of the final third of the book of Isaiah. Overall, these prophecies address Israelites in exile: Northern Kingdom exiles in Assyria, future Judean exiles in Babylon, and more. The Haftarah, in particular, addresses exiles whose thoughts and deeds are sinful and wrong, as well as others who fear that God has cut them off despite their loyalty to Him. Isaiah tells them that God’s thoughts and deeds are far exalted above theirs, and that His promise to save them soon is inviolable. To deserve redemption by God who is both righteous and forgiving, they must return to Him by abandoning evil, pursuing righteousness in society, and observing the Sabbath. God will then accept their repentance and end their exile. Their journey home to the Land will be joyful and peaceful, heralded by nature and permanently changing it. The exiles, those loyal to God who nonetheless fear that He has cut them off, and all nations devoted to God will return to the Temple, a House of prayer, joy, sacrifices, and eternal closeness to God. God will gather ever more devotees unto them and Him.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 55:6-7: All should seek and call upon God when He is near. Since God is merciful and forgives, evildoers should abandon their ways and those who think sinfully should abandon their thoughts.

Isaiah 55:6	ישעיהו נ"ה:ו
Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon him while He is near.	דְּרִשׁוּ ה' בְּהִמְצְאוֹ קְרָאֵהוּ בְהִיטּוֹ קְרוֹב:

Verses 55:8-11: By contrast, the thoughts and ways of God are far exalted above those of people. He fulfills His word as reliably as Earth’s water cycle sustains agricultural production.

Isaiah 55:8	ישעיהו נ"ה:ח
“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” says the Lord.	כִּי לֹא מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי מַחְשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם וְלֹא דַרְכֵיכֶם דַּרְכֵי נְאֻם ה':

¹ As explained in [Haftarah Helper for Fast Days](#).

² As explained in Beit Yosef, OC 428.

³ Isaiah 55:6; Rosh Hashanah 18a; Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 2:6 (see [Connection](#)).

Verses 55:12-13: When God fulfills His word to return the exiles to the Land, they will depart and travel with joy and peace. Mountains and forests they pass through will rejoice. Myrtles and cypress trees will replace thorny plants of the wilderness they pass through, enduring permanently as a sign of God's kindness.

Isaiah 55:12	ישעיהו ב"ה:י"ב
For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.	כִּי־בְשִׂמְחָה תֵצְאוּ וּבְשָׁלוֹם תִּזְכְּלוּן הַהָרִים וְהַגְּבֻעוֹת יִפְצְחוּ לִפְנֵיכֶם רִנָּה וְכָל־עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה יִמְחָאוּ־כַף:

Verses 56:1-2: God will soon save His people, revealing His righteousness. Accordingly, God's people must pursue justice and righteousness, keep God's sabbaths, and avoid evil.

Isaiah 56:1	ישעיהו ב"ו:א
Thus says the Lord, Keep judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.	כֹּה אָמַר ה' שְׁמְרוּ מִשְׁפָּט וַעֲשׂוּ צְדָקָה כִּי־קָרוֹבָה יְשׁוּעָתִי לָבוֹא וְצְדִקְתִּי לְהִגָּלוֹת:

Verses 56:3-7: Exiled Jews who are eunuchs who cannot father children, and converts from other peoples, fear they have no future with God and His people. God promises them an eternal memorial at His Temple, where they will rejoice, pray, and sacrifice along with all other peoples.

Isaiah 56:7	ישעיהו ב"ו:ז
I will bring them to My holy mount, and I will cause them to rejoice in My house of prayer, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.	וְהִבִּיאֹתִים אֶל־הַר קֹדְשִׁי וְשִׂמְחָתִים בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתִי עוֹלֹתֵיהֶם וְזִבְחֵיהֶם לְרִצּוֹן עַל־מִזְבְּחִי כִּי בֵיתִי בֵית־תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל־הָעַמִּים:

Verses 56:8: God will gather ever more people unto His people.

Isaiah 56:8	ישעיהו ב"ו:ח
The Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel says: "Yet will I gather others to him, besides those who are already gathered."	נְאֻם ה' א-קִים מְקַבֵּץ גֹּדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד אֶקַּבֵּץ עֲלָיו לְיִקְבְּצָיו

Connection

During the "Ten Days of Repentance", God is closest to those seeking to repent.

Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 2:6	משנה תורה, הלכות תשובה ב:ו
Although repentance and calling out [to God] are good at all times, during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they are even better and are accepted immediately as (Isaiah 55:6) states, "Seek the Lord while He may be found." When does the above apply? To an individual. But [regarding] a community- whenever they repent and cry out wholeheartedly, they are answered immediately as (Deuteronomy 4:7) states: "(What nation is so great that they have God close to them,) as God, our Lord, is whenever we call Him."	אף על פי שְׁהַתְּשׁוּבָה וְהַצָּעָקָה יָפָה לְעוֹלָם. בַּעֲשָׂרָה הַיָּמִים שֶׁבֵּין רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים הִיא יָפָה בְּיוֹתֵר וּמִתְקַבֵּלֶת הִיא מִיָּד שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ישעיה נה ו) "דַּרְשׁוּ ה' בְּהִמָּצְאוֹ". בַּמָּה דְבָרִים אֲמוּרִים? בְּיַחֲדָה. אֲבָל צְבוּר- כָּל זְמַן שֶׁעוֹשִׂים תְּשׁוּבָה וְצוֹעֲקִין בְּלֵב שְׁלֵם הֵם נִעֲנִין שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דברים ד ז) "כֹּה א-קִינוּ כָּכָל קְרָאנוּ אֵלָיו":