

# Haftarah Helper 5781: Yom Kippur Morning

Zachary Beer (Nachshon Project Fellow, The City College of New York) and  
Barry Kornblau (Rabbi, Young Israel of Hollis Hills-Windsor Park, Queens, NY)

## Isaiah 57:14-58:14

In the morning haftarah of the ultimate fast day and the holiest day of the year, God lambasts His people for their hypocrisy when fasting for Him. Such fasting is worthless unless their society actively promotes the welfare of its most vulnerable, with whom He primarily dwells. Indeed, greed and callousness were primary reasons for exiling His people. While God has mercy on His people, He will restore them spiritually and physically only when they feed their poor, clothe their naked, avoid treachery and deceit when transacting with others, and observe the Sabbath.

### Haftarah Breakdown

Verse 57:14-19: God was angry with His people, but now has mercy upon them.

Isaiah 57:16	ישעיהו נ"ז:ט"ז
For I will not contend forever, neither will I be wroth to eternity, when a spirit from before Me humbles itself, and souls [which] I have made.	כִּי לֹא לְעוֹלָם אֶרְיֵב וְלֹא לְנֶצַח אֶקְצוֹף כִּי-רוּחַ מִלְּפָנַי יַעֲטוּף וְנִשְׁמוֹת אֲנִי עָשִׂיתִי:

Verses 57:20-21: But God will not have mercy on the wicked.

Isaiah 57:21	ישעיהו נ"ז:כ"א
"There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."	אֵין שְׁלוֹם אָמַר אֱלֹהֵי לְרָשָׁעִים: (ו)

Verses 58:1-5: God does not desire the empty "religious" fasting of his people.

Isaiah 58:5	ישעיהו נ"ח:ה
Is such the fast I desire, a day of man's afflicting his soul? Is it to bend his head like a fishhook, and spread out sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord?	הֲכִזֵּה יְהוָה צוֹם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ יוֹם עֲנוֹת אָדָם נִפְשׁוֹ הֲלֹכֶף כְּאֶגְמֹן רֹאשׁוֹ וְשָׁק וְאֶפֶר יִצְיַע הַלְזֶה תִּקְרָא-צוֹם וַיּוֹם רְצוֹן לַיהוָה

Verses 58:6-7: "The Fast I Desire"- God wants his people to perform justice...

Isaiah 58:6	ישעיהו נ"ח:ו
No, this is the fast I desire: To undo the fetters of wickedness, to untie the bands of the yoke, and to send free the oppressed, and to break off every yoke.	הֲלוֹא זֶה צוֹם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ פְתֹחַ חֲרֻצוֹת רָשָׁע הַתֵּר אֲגַדּוֹת מוֹטָה וְשַׁלַּח רְצוּצִים חֲפְזִים וְכָל-מוֹטָה תִּנְתְּקוּ:

Verses 58:8-12: ... and only then will God fully restore them.

Isaiah 58:10	ישעיהו נ"ח:י
[When] you extend your soul to the hungry, and sate an afflicted soul, [then] your light shall shine in the darkness, and your darkness shall be like noon.	וְתִפְקֶה לְרַעֵב נִפְשֶׁךָ וְנִפְשׁ נַעֲנֶה תִשְׂבִּיעַ וְזָרַח בְּחֹשֶׁךְ אֹרְךָ וְאֶפְלַתֶךָ כְּצַהֲרָיִם:

## Haftarah Breakdown (cont.)

Verses 58:13-14: Additionally, this just society must observe the Sabbath. If they do, God will greatly reward them.

Isaiah 58:13-14	ישעיהו נ"ח:י"ג-י"ד
If you restrain your foot because of the Sabbath, from performing your affairs on My holy day, and you call the Sabbath a delight, [and call] the holy [day] of the Lord honored, and you honor it by not doing your [ordinary] ways, and by not pursuing your affairs or discussing your [personal] affairs -- then shall you delight with the Lord, and I [God] will cause you to ride on the high places of the land, and I will feed you the heritage of your father, Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.	אִם-תִּשְׁבֹּת רַגְלְךָ מִשְׁבַּת רַגְלְךָ עֲשׂוֹת חֲפָצֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם קִדְשִׁי וְקָרָאתָ לַשְּׁבֻת עֵינֶיךָ לְקָדוֹשׁ יְהוָה מְכַבֵּד וְכַבְּדָתוֹ מַעֲשׂוֹת דְרָכֶיךָ מִמִּצְוֹת חֲפָצֶיךָ וְדַבַּר דְּבָר: אֲזַי תִּתְעַבֵּב עַל-ה' וְהִרְפַּבְתִּיךָ עַל-בְּמוֹתַי אֲרָץ וְהֶאֱכַלְתִּי יֶיךָ נַחֲלַת יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיךָ כִּי פִי ה' דָּבָר: (o)

### Other Connections

The Talmud quotes verse 57:19 to show **the power of repentance (Hebrew: תשובה)**.

Berakhot 34b	ברכות ל"ד עמוד ב
Rabbi Abbahu said: “In the place where penitents stand, the fully righteous do not stand, as [Isaiah 57:19] states, ‘Peace, peace to one who is far, and to one who is near.’ [Peace is extended] first to the one who is far [the penitent], and afterwards [it is extended] to the one who is near [the fully righteous].”	דָּאָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ: מְקוֹם שֶׁבַעֲלֵי תְשׁוּבָה עוֹמְדִין — צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרִים אִינָם עוֹמְדִין, שְׁנֵאמַר: “שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם לְרַחוּק וְלִקְרוֹב.” “לְרַחוּק” בְּרִישָׁא, וְהִדְר “לִקְרוֹב.”

The Talmud also powerfully utilizes the Haftarah and other sources to **define God's “humility.”** Some recite this passage at the end of Shabbat as part of the verses of blessing known as “Vayiten Lecha.”

Megillah 31a	מגילה ל"א עמוד א
Rabbi Yoḥanan said: “Wherever you find [reference in the Bible to] the might of the Holy One, Blessed be He, you also find [reference to] His humility. This fact is written in the Torah, repeated in the Prophets, and stated a third time in the Writings.	אמר ר' יוחנן כל מקום שאתה מוצא גבורתו של הקב"ה אתה מוצא ענוותנותו דבר זה כתוב בתורה ושנוי בנביאים ומשולש בכתובים
It is written in the Torah: ‘For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords,’ after which is written, ‘He executes the judgment of the fatherless and widow’ (Deuteronomy 10:17-18).	כתוב בתורה (דברים י, יז) כי ה' אלהיכם הוא אלקי האלקים ואדוני האדונים וכתוב בתריה עושה משפט יתום ואלמנה
It is repeated in the Prophets: ‘For thus says the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, Whose name is sacred...,’ after which is written, ‘[... He revives the spirit of] the lowly [and revives] the heart of the contrite ones’ (Isaiah 57:15).	שנוי בנביאים (ישעיהו נז, טו) כה אמר רם ונשא שוכן עד וקדוש וגו' וכתוב בתריה ואת דכא ושפל רוח
It is stated a third time in the Writings, as is written: ‘Extol Him Who rides upon the clouds, Whose name is the Lord,’ after which is written, ‘A father of the fatherless, and a judge of widows.’ (Psalms 68:5-6)”	משולש בכתובים דכתיב (תהלים סח, ה) סולו לרוכב בערבות ביה שמו וכתוב בתריה אבי יתומים ודיין אלמנות

With emendations, biblical translations are by Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg and other translations are from Sefaria.org.

To dedicate, comment, or subscribe, email [zbeer570@gmail.com](mailto:zbeer570@gmail.com).