

הַפְּטָרָה לַיּוֹם כַּפּוּר (שַׁחֲרִית)

HAFTARAH FOR YOM KIPPUR MORNING

ISAIAH 57:14–58:14

This *haftarah* is drawn from prophecies addressed to the Judean community near the end of the 6th century B.C.E. The words were spoken sometime after Cyrus the Mede had conquered Babylon and issued a decree (in 538 B.C.E.) allowing subject populations; like the Judeans, to return to their native lands and practices. It is unclear whether this series of prophecies is addressed to Judeans still in exile or to members of the restored community in Zion. As a reading for *Yom Kippur*, the prophet's words transcend their original setting, opening a path for piety and repentance.

The people are told of God's concern for the contrite, of His healing forgiveness for the meek in spirit. This word of hope is followed by an exhortation dealing with the sins of the House of Israel. Although they seek God daily, "like a nation that does what is right" (Isa. 58:2), they are mindless of their duplicity and evil deeds. A powerful instruction in religious action follows, in an attempt to shatter the crust of ritual formalism and moral blindness. If the people take this teaching to heart, the prophet promises them the light of God's presence and the healing waters of renewal. A final word celebrates *Shabbat* rest, as a sign of a transformed religious consciousness and commitment to God.

To inculcate a transformation of religious consciousness and action is the dominant concern of this *haftarah*. The Lord calls to the prophet: "Clear a road! / Remove all obstacles / From the road of My people!" (Isa. 57:14). This road is no mere physical highway leading from exile to the homeland, but a path of inner renewal, leading from "greed" to a "contrite" spirit (vv. 15–17) and from duplicity and contention to compassion and justice (58:3–7, 9–10). Inwardness thus involves the cultivation of humility and empathy, virtues that form the keystone of rebuilt religiosity. God will bless such a life with light and healing (57:18–19, 58:8, 10–11).

The instruction that God will answer only those who help the oppressed, the hungry, and the poor (58:6–7)—not those who merely afflict their bodies—captures the essence of the prophet's words. The commitment to God is condensed into an injunction to uphold the sanctity of *Shabbat* (58:13). It is such a commitment that is desired, not merely eagerness for the nearness of God (see 58:2).

The prophet's rhetoric stresses the misuse of fasting to stress the values of social responsibility. He does not wholly condemn ritual acts such as fasting. What he condemns is false piety, particularly when it is accompanied by deeds of oppression and wickedness. God does not desire such behavior any more than He condones solemn "assemblies with iniquity" (Isa. 1:13). Ritual must be grounded in a spiritual core of moral sensibility and action.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR

The Talmud designates this *haftarah* as the prophetic reading for *Yom Kippur* morning (BT Meg. 31a). Rashi notes that this is because of its focus of repentance, emphasizing the phrase "No, this is the fast I desire" (Isa. 58:6). This phrase is followed by a series of instructions for a reformed religious life.

The language of fasting and self-affliction in Isa. 58:3–5—especially the phrase "we starved our bodies" (*ininu nafsheinu*)—echoes the terminology of the Torah reading for *Yom Kippur* morning (see Lev. 16:31). Juxtaposing these two readings in a synagogue service invites congregants to reflect on the relationship between ritual acts and their spiritual purpose. At the center of Jewish piety are the moral challenge and the critique of ritual that this *haftarah* offers.

57

14[The LORD] says:

Build up, build up a highway!

Clear a road!

Remove all obstacles

From the road of My people!

15For thus said He who high aloft

Forever dwells, whose name is holy:

I dwell on high, in holiness;

I dwell on high, in holiness;

Yet with the contrite and the lowly in spirit—

Reviving the spirits of the lowly,

Reviving the hearts of the contrite.

16For I will not always contend,

I will not be angry forever:

Nay, I who make spirits flag,

Also create the breath of life.

17For their sinful greed I was angry;

I struck them and turned away in My wrath.

Though stubborn, they follow the way of
their hearts,

18I note how they fare and will heal them:

I will guide them and mete out solace to
them,And to the mourners among them 19hearten-
ing, comforting words:

It shall be well,

Well with the far and the near

—said the LORD—

And I will heal them.

נז 14 ואמר

סלֹו־סלֹו

פְּנֵי־דֶרֶךְ

הַרְיִמוֹ מִכְשׁוֹל

מִדֶּרֶךְ עַמִּי: ס

15 כִּי כֹה אָמַר רַם וְנִשְׂא

שֹׁכֵן עַד וְקָדוֹשׁ שְׁמוֹ

מְרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ אֲשֶׁכּוֹן

וְאֶת־דַּפָּא וְשִׁפְל־רוּחַ

לְהַחְיֹת רוּחַ שְׁפָלִים

וְלִהְחַיֹּת לֵב נִדְפָאִים:

16 כִּי לֹא לְעוֹלָם אֲרִיב

וְלֹא לְנֶצַח אֶקְצֹף

כִּי־רוּחַ מִלְּפָנַי יַעֲטוּף

וְנִשְׁמוֹת אֲנִי עֹשִׂיתִי:

17 בְּעֶזְרִי בִצְעוּ קִצְפֹתַי

וְאֶפְהִי הַסֵּתֶר וְאֶקְצֹף

וַיִּלֶךְ שׁוֹבֵב בְּדֶרֶךְ לְבוֹ:

18 דֶּרֶכְיוֹ רָאִיתִי וְאֶרְפְּאֵהוּ

וְאֶנְחָהוּ וְאֶשְׁלֵם נַחְמִים לוֹ

וְלֹא־בְלִיּוֹ: 19 בּוֹרֵא נוֹב נִיב שְׁפָתַיִם

שְׁלוֹם |

שְׁלוֹם לְרַחוּק וְלִקְרוֹב

אָמַר יְהוָה

וּרְפָאתֵיו:

Isaiah 57:14. Build up, build up Doubling of words is a stylistic hallmark of Isa. 40–66. This feature serves to reinforce and energize the contents of the speech (Radak on Isa. 40:1).

15. He who high aloft / Forever dwells Hebrew: *ram v'nissa shokhen ad*. This depiction of divine transcendence, above and beyond the world, is followed immediately by a statement of God's indwelling in the world, God's immanence. These are the two poles of biblical theology.

Yet with the contrite and the lowly in spirit Despite His exalted status, God is present in the

lives of the lowly (Radak, ibn Kaspi). This theology is also expressed in a personal prayer: "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; / those crushed in spirit He delivers" (Ps. 34:19).

19. It shall be well, / Well with the far and the near God's blessing of *shalom* is extended to all those who merit divine healing and comfort (v. 18). An old tradition interpreted "the far" as the righteous who observe the Torah from "of old," and "the near" as those who repent and turn to Torah now (Targ. Jon.).

20But the wicked are like the troubled sea
Which cannot rest,
Whose waters toss up mire and mud.
21There is no safety

—said my God—

For the wicked.

58 Cry with full throat, without restraint;
Raise your voice like a ram's horn!
Declare to My people their transgression,
To the House of Jacob their sin.

2To be sure, they seek Me daily,
Eager to learn My ways.
Like a nation that does what is right,
That has not abandoned the laws of its God,
They ask Me for the right way,
They are eager for the nearness of God:
3“Why, when we fasted, did You not see?
When we starved our bodies, did You pay no
heed?”

Because on your fast day
You see to your business
And oppress all your laborers!
4Because you fast in strife and contention,
And you strike with a wicked fist!
Your fasting today is not such
As to make your voice heard on high.

5Is such the fast I desire,
A day for men to starve their bodies?
Is it bowing the head like a bulrush
And lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Do you call that a fast,
A day when the LORD is favorable?

20. *the wicked are like the troubled sea.* Inner turbulence gives them no rest, and keeps them far from God.

20 וְהַרְשָׁעִים כַּיָּם נִגְרָשׁ
כִּי הַשְּׁקֵט לֹא יוֹכֵל
וַיִּגְרָשׁוּ מִיָּמָיו רֶפֶשׁ וְטִיט:
21 אֵין שְׁלוֹם
אָמַר אֱלֹהֵי
לְרָשָׁעִים: 5

נח קְרֹא בְגֵרוֹן אֶל־תַּחֲשֹׁף

כְּשׁוֹפֵר הָרֵם קוֹלְךָ
וְהִגַּד לְעַמִּי פְשָׁעֵם
וּלְבֵית יַעֲקֹב חַטָּאתָם:

2 וְאוֹתֵי יוֹם יוֹם יִדְרֹשׁוּן
וְדַעַת דְּרָכֶי יִחְפְּצוּן
כַּגֹּי אֲשֶׁר־צִדְקָה עָשָׂה
וּמִשְׁפָּט אֱלֹהֵיו לֹא עִזַּב
יִשְׁאַלוּנִי מִשְׁפָּטֵי־צֶדֶק
קִרְבַּת אֱלֹהִים יִחְפְּצוּן:
3 לָמָּה צָמְנוּ וְלֹא רָאִיתָ
עֲנִינוּ נַפְשָׁנוּ וְלֹא תִדַּע
הֵן בְּיוֹם צָמְכֶם
תִּמְצְאוּ־חֶפֶץ

וְכֹל־עַצְבֵיכֶם תִּנְגָּשׁוּ:
4 הֵן לָרִיב וּמִצֵּה תִצְוִמוּ
וְלִהְיוֹת בְּאִגְרֵף רִשָׁע
לֹא־תִצְוִמוּ כִּיוֹם

לְהִשְׁמִיעַ בְּמִרוֹם קוֹלְכֶם:
5 הֲכֹזֶה יִהְיֶה צוֹם אֲבַתְרָהוּ
יוֹם עֲנוֹת אָדָם נַפְשׁוֹ
הֲלִכְף כְּאִגְמֹן רֹאשׁוֹ
וְשָׂק וְאֶפֶר יִצִּיעַ
הֲלֹזָה תִקְרָא־צוֹם
וְיוֹם רָצוֹן לִיהוָה:

6No, this is the fast I desire:

To unlock fetters of wickedness,
And untie the cords of the yoke
To let the oppressed go free;
To break off every yoke.

7It is to share your bread with the hungry,
And to take the wretched poor into your
home;

When you see the naked, to clothe him,
And not to ignore your own kin.

8Then shall your light burst through like the
dawn

And your healing spring up quickly;
Your Vindicator shall march before you,
The Presence of the LORD shall be your rear
guard.

9Then, when you call, the LORD will answer;
When you cry, He will say: Here I am.
If you banish the yoke from your midst,
The menacing hand, and evil speech,

10And you offer your compassion to the
hungry
And satisfy the famished creature—

Then shall your light shine in darkness,
And your gloom shall be like noonday.

11The LORD will guide you always;
He will slake your thirst in parched places
And give strength to your bones.

You shall be like a watered garden,
Like a spring whose waters do not fail.

12Men from your midst shall rebuild ancient
ruins,

You shall restore foundations laid long ago.
And you shall be called

“Repairer of fallen walls,
Restorer of lanes for habitation.”

13If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,

6 הָלֹא זֶה צוֹם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ
פִתְחֵי חַרְצָבוֹת רָשָׁע
הֲתֵר אֲגָדוֹת מוֹטֵה
וְשַׁלַּח רְצוּצִים חַפְּשִׁים
וְכָל־מוֹטֵה תִּנְתְּקוּ:

7 הָלֹא פָרַס לָרֵעַב לַחֲמֶה
וְעֲנִיִּים מְרוּדִים תָּבִיא בַּיִת
כִּי־תֵרְאֶה עָרֹם וְכִסִּיתוֹ
וּמִבְשָׂרָה לֹא תִתְעַלֵּם:

8 אִזּוּ יִבְקַע כַּשַּׁחַר אוֹרָה
וְאֶרְכָּתָהּ מִהֵרָה תִצְמַח
וְהָלַךְ לִפְנֵיהֶּ צְדָקָה
כְּבוֹד יְהוָה יֵאֲסָפָה:

9 אִזּוּ תִקְרָא וַיְהוָה יַעֲנֶה
תִּשְׁוַע וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי
אִם־תִּסִּיר מִתּוֹכָהּ מוֹטֵה
שָׁלַח אֶצְבַּע וְדָבַר־אָנוּ:

10 וְתַפַּק לָרֵעַב נַפְשָׁה
וְנַפֵּשׁ נַעֲנֶה תִשְׁבִּיעַ
וְזָרַח בַּחֹשֶׁךְ אוֹרָה
וְאֶפְלַתָּהּ כַּצִּהָרִים:

11 וְנִחַךְ יְהוָה תִּמְיֵד
וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ בְּצַחֲצַחוֹת נַפְשָׁה
וְעֲצַמְתֶּיהָ יִחְלִיץ
וְהָיִיתָ כְּגֵן רוֹהַ

וְכִמּוֹצָא מַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִכְזָבוּ מִיַּמְיוֹ:
12 וּבָנוּ מִמֶּה חֲרֻבוֹת עוֹלָם
מוֹסְדֵי דוֹר־וָדוֹר תִּקְוָמָם
וְקָרָא לָהּ

גֵּדֵר פְּרָץ

מִשְׁבֵּב נְתִיבוֹת לְשַׁבַּת:

13 אִם־תִּשָּׁב מִשַּׁבַּת רְגְלָהּ

From pursuing your affairs on My holy day;
 If you call the sabbath "delight,"
 The LORD's holy day "honored";
 And if you honor it and go not your ways
 Nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains—
 14 Then you can seek the favor of the LORD.
 I will set you astride the heights of the earth,
 And let you enjoy the heritage of your father
 Jacob—
 For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

עֲשׂוֹת חֲפְצֶיךָ בְּיוֹם קֹדֶשׁ
 וְקָרָאתָ לְשַׁבַּת עֲנֵגָה
 לְקָדוֹשׁ יְהוָה מְכֻבָּד
 וְכִבְדָתוֹ מַעֲשׂוֹת דְרָכֶיךָ
 מִמִּצּוֹא חֲפְצֶךָ וְדַבַּר דְּבָר;
 14 אִזּוֹ תִתְעַנֵּג עַל-יְהוָה
 וְהִרְפַּבְתִּיךָ עַל-בְּמוֹתַי בְּמַתֵּי אֶרֶץ
 וְהֵאכַלְתִּיךָ נַחֲלַת יַעֲקֹב אָבִיךָ
 כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר: ס

Isaiah 58:14. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken This is a technical formula used to recall and reapply an earlier prophecy or instruction. Here the divine promise in this verse—"I will set you astride [*v'birka'v'itikhā*] the heights of the earth [*al bamotei aretz*], 1. And let you enjoy [*va-ha-akhaltikhā*] the heritage [*nahalat*] of your father Jacob"—evokes the Song of Moses (Deut.

32:9,13). There, with similar language, the people are told that Jacob is the Lord's portion, or heritage (*nahalato*), and that He sustained him (*va-yokhal*) and "set him atop the highlands [*yarkiveihu al bamotei aretz*]." That account of divine care is now transformed into a prophecy of future beneficence—a new settlement in the land, made conditional upon *Shabbat* observance.