

1. Archive <https://www.yutorah.org/search/?teacher=81072&collection=7733>

2. Atar Hadari, *The Prophet Whose Glorious Words Permeate Jewish Consciousness*, Mosaic

Jews look to Isaiah, I would argue, principally for the glorious language in which he portrays both the degradations of his own time and the redemption that will arrive in Gd's good time. And that language is on overpowering display not just once a year, in this week's haftarah, but in more haftarot than have been taken from any other prophet...

What is more, haftarot aside, Isaiah is quoted so frequently in the daily prayers as to be considered perhaps the third author of the *siddur*, lagging behind only Moses (to whom the Pentateuch is ascribed) and David (who wrote the Psalms)... The list goes on and on. Thanks to it, Isaiah's words and phrases, more thoroughly and more deeply than those even of Moses, have entered and permeated the spoken Hebrew tongue. My mother, for instance, when complaining about something my brother and I had or hadn't done, always quoted with relish Isaiah's opening lines about troublesome sons, much as a literate Englishwoman would have turned to King Lear's "how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

## Introduction

### Timeline

Middle of the first Beit haMikdash

Navi for an extraordinarily long time, perhaps more than 80 years based on 1:1 and 6:1

Kings of Judea

Amatziah	Righteous (Melachim II 14)
Uziah/Azaryah	Righteous for much of his long reign (Melachim II 15:3), until the end
Yotam	Very righteous (Melachim II 15:34 Divrei haYamim II 27)
Achaz	Idolatrous and Fearful (Melachim II 16:1-4)
Chizkiyahu	Very righteous (Melachim II 18), but seeks inappropriate alliances
Menasheh	Wicked? (Melachim II 21:2-3, Divrei haYamim II 33:10-19)

Neighbours and Threats

Aram	Ally of Yisrael, enemy of Judea. Today's Syria.
Assyria	Rising power, transfers conquered populations.
Babylon	Will crush Assyria and destroy the First Beit haMikdash
Edom	A nation to be punished, perhaps for aiding Babylon
Persia	Not a force yet, but Yeshayah envisions their King Cyrus as Mashiach

### The Book

#### Structure

Opening chapters address wealth of King Uziah

Yeshayah attempts to bolster King Achaz against joining Assyria or the Yisrael/Aram Alliance

Visions for a future reckoning for those who have sinned – Jews and others

The pressure on King Chizkiyahu regarding the Assyrian invasion

Visions of a future redemption

#### Themes

Defining righteous human activity

Our national political identity

Our relationship with Gd

The future

#### Yeshayah himself

His family is royal, or at least powerful; he is comfortable with kings

Married with children (see Chap 7-8), and his daughter marries Chizkiyahu

Has many students, who carry his message forward (perhaps in secret)

## Two big questions

How will he advise the leadership across different eras?

How will he advise the general population during these different periods?

### Chapter 1: A Transplanted Rebuke

- May be the start of the book
- Themes
  - Passionate Divine rebuke for abandoning Gd and for social injustice
  - Gd rejects our holidays and korbanot, and compares Jerusalem to Sdom
  - Failure to recognize why we suffer
- Questions
  - Why was this placed first in the book?
  - Is this truly a polemic against korbanot?
  - Why the focus on Jerusalem?

### 3. Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim 3:32

Many prophetic books contain rebukes of people for their great efforts and attachment to bringing offerings... Samuel said, "Does Gd want offerings as He wants people to listen to the Divine Voice?" Isaiah said, "Why would I want your masses of offerings?" Jeremiah said, "I did not speak to your ancestors and I did not command them, on the day I took them out of Egypt, regarding offerings. I instructed them this: Listen to My voice and I will be your Gd and you will be My nation."... The primary intent is for you to perceive Me and not serve others, and I will be your Gd and you will be My nation. This was the goal of the command to bring offerings and focus upon the House... and you came and cancelled the ends and attached yourselves to the means.

### Chapter 2: Jerusalem at the Head of Mountains

- May be a reaction to Chapter 1, or the start of the book
- Similar passage in Michah 4
- Themes
  - Rebuke of King Uzziah: Earn international respect and utopia by representing Gd's Torah
  - The focus is Jerusalem
  - This could happen at any time in the future
- Questions
  - Which other prophets rebuked powerful figures in this way?
  - Do we believe the world will come to accept Torah?

### 4. Abarbanel to Yeshayah 2:4

והבית ההוא ר"ל בקדושתו ונבואתו ישפוט בין הגוים ויוכיח לעמ' רבים על עניני מלחמותם אלו עם אלו... כי דברו ונבואתו ישפוט ויוכיח בין הגוים וישים שלום בארץ, לפי שהנבואה אשר תתחדש אז בעולם תעשה זה מה שלא היה קודם לכן... ומיכה הוסיף עוד ביאור באמרו (מיכה ד, ד) "וישבו איש תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו ואין מחריד כי פי ד' דבר." וענינו שנתן הסבה למה יתבטלו המלחמות מבין העמים, ואמר שהסיבה הגדולה במלחמות הוא שינוי הדתות בין העמים, כמלחמת אדום וישמעאל, ובהיותם כלם קוראים בשם ד' ונכנעים למצותו בהסכמה אחת, ישבו בטח בדם מבלי גזל וחמס ואין מחריד, "כי פי ד' דבר", ר"ל שבמצותו אשר יקבלו בעלותם לבית המקדש יהיו כלם מתאחדים ומסכימים ולא ישמע עוד חמס בארצם...

That house, meaning its sanctity and prophecy, will judge among the nations and rebuke many nations for their wars with each other... His word and His prophecy will judge and rebuke among the nations and make peace in the land, for the prophecy which will be renewed in the world at that time will accomplish that which had not existed before... And Michah added clarification, saying (4:4), "And each will sit beneath his grapevine and beneath his fig and none will make them tremble, for Gd has spoken." Meaning, this is why wars will cease among the nations. The major reason for war is the variation in religions among the nations, as in the war of Edom and Yishmael. When all of them call in the Name of Gd and are humbled before His command as one, they will live peacefully, without theft and violence and

none will make them tremble, "for Gd has spoken," meaning that with His mitzvah which they will accept when they ascend to the Temple, all of them will be unified and in agreement, and no violence will be heard in their land...

#### Chapters 3-4: The Sins of Uziahu's Kingdom, and Their Fate

- Themes
  - The disappearance of good leaders
  - The cleansing of selfish and arrogant leaders, laying the groundwork for Mashiach
- Questions
  - Does Yeshayah believe the good leaders disappear naturally, or by Divine intervention?
  - What is the message of Yeshayah's polemic against *znuf*?

#### 5. Abarbanel to Yeshayah 3:4

שימשלו עליהם הנערים, וכבר זכר הפלוסוף באחד מהמדות שאין הפרש בין הנער כפי השנים ובין הנער כפי מדות השכל, ומסכים לזה חכמים ז"ל (חגיגה יד, א) נערים אלו בני אדם המנוערים מן המצות...

Youths will rule them. And the philosopher (Aristotle) has already said in one of his attributes that there is no difference between a 'youth' in age and a 'youth' in wisdom, matching Chagigah 14a, "These youths [*ne'arim*] are people who are empty [*menu'arim*] of mitzvot."

#### 6. Talmud, Chagigah 14a

שמונה עשרה קללות קילל ישעיה את ישראל ולא נתקררה דעתו עד שאמר להם המקרא הזה ירהבו הנער בזקן והנגלה בנכבד...  
Isaiah cursed Israel 18 times [in this passage], and he was not calmed until he said this: "The youth will reign over the aged, and the lowly over the honoured"...

#### Chapter 5: The Song of the Divine Vineyard

- Themes
  - Gd sues the vineyard which has betrayed its Owner
  - Specific criticism: Harming the vulnerable; Seeking pleasure; Denying Divine power; Warping justice
  - Punishment is coming
- Questions
  - Why is this song in the first person?
  - How does the image of Gd as a vineyard owner criticize Uziahu?

#### 7. Abarbanel to Yeshayah 5, Introduction

אמנם השירה אי זו שתהיה היא ברוח הקדש, ולכן אינה מפעל ד' כי אם מפעל הנביא עצמו שסידר אותה, כי כמו שזכרתי אינו מהבטל שהנביאים עם היותם רואים פעמים רבות מראות נבואיו' אמתיות הנה בהיותם יקצים ומבלתי נבואה ידברו דברים ברוח הקדש... לכן יחסה הכתוב תמיד אליהם לא לד' יתברך, כי הנה אמר בשירת הים (שמות טו, א), "אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל... אשירה לד'..." כי משה ובני ישראל עצמם סדרו אותה שירה והמשילו הקב"ה בגבור ואיש מלחמה...

רוח הקדש אינו כן כי אין בו ראיית צורות ומשלים ואין בהגעתו תרדמה וביטול החושים, אבל הנביא רוצה ובוחר לדבר מה שירצה, ודרכו להפליג לדבר דברים בחכמות או בתושבחות או בדברי אזהרה, וזה כלו בעת היקיצה והשתמש החושים על מנהגייהם, ומפני שילוח אליו רוח ועזר אלקי לדבר דבריו נקרא מדרגתו רוח הקדש.

In truth, this song, as it is, was via Divine inspiration. Therefore, it was not a Divine creation, but the creation of the prophet himself, who arranged it. As I have mentioned, it is not impossible that a prophet, despite seeing true prophetic visions many times, might while awake, and not experiencing prophecy, speak words with Divine inspiration... Therefore the text always ascribes it to them and not to Gd, for it said at the Song at the Sea, "Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang... I will sing to Gd..." for Moshe and the Children of Israel themselves arranged that song, and compared Gd to a mighty warrior...

Divine inspiration is not thus, for it lacks any visions of forms or parables, and it does not come with sleep and the loss of one's senses. But the prophet desires and chooses to speak as he chooses, and his way is to expand and speak wisdom or praises [of Gd] or warnings, all while awake and using his senses normally. And because he is accompanied by a Divine spirit and assistance in speaking, his level is called "Divine inspiration".

## Chapter 6: Yeshayahu's Initiation

- May be the start of the book
- Themes
  - Yeshayah sees the Divine throne room, and singing malachim
  - Three approaches
    - Rebuke for Jews at a time of royal transition
    - The commissioning of Yeshayah
    - Trial of the Jews, Yeshayah or Uziahu
- Questions
  - Why is Yeshayah's vision different from those of Michayahu (Melachim I 22) and Yechezkel (Yechezkel 1)?
  - Why isn't Yeshayah afraid?
  - Does Gd say we don't listen, or that Yeshayah should prevent us from listening?

### 8. Radak to Yeshayah 6:5

ופירוש "טמא שפתים" הראשון סגור שפתים... ר"ל כי חשב בעצמו עון שלא הקדיש הקל עם כחות השרפים כי לא נתן לו רשות לדבר עד שהגיע המלאך הרצפה אל פיו. והנראה בעיני כי לפיכך זכר טומאת שפתים ולא טומאת הגוף...

The meaning of the first "of impure lips" was "sealed lips"... Meaning, he thought he was guilty for not sanctifying Gd with the forces of *seraphim*, for he had not been permitted to speak until the malach touched the *ritzpah* to his mouth. To me, this is why he mentioned "impure lips" and not an impure body...

### 9. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 6:3

ואפשר שיחטא אדם חטא גדול או חטאים רבים עד שיתן הדין לפני דיין האמת שיהא הפרעון מזה החוטא על חטאים אלו שעשה ברצונו ומדעתו שמונעין ממנו התשובה ואין מניחין לו רשות לשוב מרשעו כדי שימות ויאבד בחטאו שיעשה, הוא שהקב"ה אמר על ידי ישעיהו השמן לב העם הזה וגו'...

A person might perform a great sin, or multiple sins, until the judgment before the Judge of Truth must be that the payment of this sinner for these sins – which he performed willingly and knowingly – is that repentance be withheld from him. He is not given an opportunity to repent from his evil, so that he will die and be destroyed because of his sins. This is what Gd said via Yeshayahu, "Wrap in fat the heart of this nation, etc."

## Chapter 7: Achaz, don't fear!

- Context: The Syro-Ephraimite Alliance is threatening
- Themes
  - Achaz wants to join the Syro-Ephraimite Alliance
  - Yeshayah uses names of children to convey that the Alliance will be crushed
  - Achaz refuses Yeshayah's offer of a miracle as a Divine sign
- Questions
  - Do we seek protective alliances?
  - Why does Achaz refuse the sign?
  - What is the sign in the birth of a boy to an *almah*?

### 10. Abarbanel to Yeshayah 7:11-12

אומר שהדברים אשר יעשו הנביאים בכח הקל ית' כנגד הטבע, נמצא להם בכתבי הקדש שמות מתחלפים, כי פעמים יקראום "אותות"..." מופתים"... "נסים" או "מסות" שכלו לשון אחד... "פלאים"... והיוצא מזה כולו, שהשמות האלה ארבעתם עם היות שפעמים יאמרו על הדברים היוצאין מהמנהג הטבעי, הנה ברוב הפעמים יאמרו גם כן על הסימנים והראיות שיעשו בני אדם על עניניהם והיא ההנחה הראשונה שלהם. וכאשר יאמרו על הדברים אשר הם בזולת המנהג הטבעי תהיה קריאתם כן על דרך השאלה, ובבחינת היותם ראיות וסמנים...

I say that the Divinely powered, supernatural deeds of prophets are known by different names in Holy Scripture; sometimes they are called *otot... moftim... nisim or masot*, which are the same... *pela'im*...

What emerges from all of this is that these four names, even though they are sometimes used regarding supernatural phenomena, mostly refer as well to signs and evidence which people perform for their affairs, and this is their primary meaning. When these terms are used for the supernatural, that is as a borrowed term, to signify evidence and signs...

## Chapter 8: Stay calm and trust Gd

- Themes
  - Write on a large paper: למהר שלל חש בו
  - Message to the nation: Go slow and trust Gd
- Question: Why a large paper? It's a message of just four words!

## Chapter 9: The Collapse of Yisrael

- Themes
  - Mashiach (Chizkiyahu) is coming for Yehudah
  - The Syro-Ephraimite Alliance will self-destruct due to their arrogance and abuse of the vulnerable
- Question: What is the meaning of the sealed ם in למרבה?

### 11. Talmud, Sanhedrin 94a

"למרבה המשרה ולשלום אין קץ וגו'" אמר רבי תנחום, דרש בר קפרא בציפורי: מפני מה כל מ"ם שבאמצע תיבה פתוח וזה סתום? ביקש הקב"ה לעשות חזקיהו משיח וסנחריב גוג ומגוג, אמרה מדת הדין לפני הקב"ה, רבש"ע! ומה דוד מלך ישראל שאמר כמה שירות ותשבחות לפניך לא עשיתו משיח, חזקיהו שעשית לו כל הנסים הללו ולא אמר שירה לפניך תעשהו משיח? לכך נסתתם.

Rabbi Tanchum said: Bar Kappara taught in Tzipori: Why is every mid-word *mem* open, and this one closed? Gd wanted to make Chizkiyahu into Mashiach and Sancherev into Gog uMagog. Justice said before Gd: Master of the Universe! David, King of Israel, sang many praises before You and You did not make him Mashiach; You performed all of these miracles for Chizkiyahu and he did not sing before You, shall You make him Mashiach? And so it was sealed.

## Chapter 10: The Downfall of Assyria

- Themes
  - Arrogant Assyria thinks it is creating victory, and will be punished short of Jerusalem
  - But for now, Gd's servant – Assyria – is coming
- Questions
  - Why is human arrogance such an issue for Gd?
  - When Gd speaks of destroying Assyria, who is the audience?

### 12. Rabbi Yoel bin Nun, **אלקים נמצא במפלות גדולות**, <https://www.929.org.il/page/344/post/9077>

התגלות ד' בהיסטוריה איננה בניצחונות ולא בהישגים, אלא דווקא במפלות הגדולות. כל ניצחון אשורי הוא גילוי של זעם ד' על המוכסים. הבנה נכונה של ההיסטוריה דורשת דין וחשבון של הנכשלים. המנצחים הם רק כלי זמני לביצוע התבוסות, ומפלתם הצפויה היא יד ד'.  
The revelation of Gd in history is not in victories or achievements, but specifically in great downfalls. The entire Assyrian victory was a revelation of Divine anger upon those who were crushed. A true understanding of history demands an accounting by those who lose; the victors are only a temporary tool for executing the crushing, and their own anticipated downfall comes at the hand of Gd.

## Chapters 11-12: Ultimate Utopia

- Themes
  - A full utopian vision
  - The righteous Mashiach from Yishai: Ruach hakodesh, and righteousness and justice
- Questions
  - How does Mashiach fit into these practical messages for Achaz?
  - Will animals actually cease to be dangerous?

### 13. Radak to Yeshayah 11:1

סמך פרשה זו שהיא עתידה לימות המשיח להבטחה שהיתה בימי חזקיהו, אמר אל תתמהו על פלא גדול כזה שיעשה בימי חזקיהו במפלת מחנה אשור כרגע אחד כי עוד יעשה לישראל פלא גדול מזה בימות המשיח שיהיה לישראל בקבוץ גלויות, וזה יהיה ממשפחת המלך חזקיהו...  
He juxtaposed this section, which is about the future time of Mashiach, with the promise for the time of Chizkiyahu. He said: Don't be shocked at this great wonder, that it should be done in the time of Chizkiyahu, with the fall of the Assyrian

camp in a single moment. He will perform a greater wonder for Israel in the time of Mashiach, when the diaspora of Yisrael will be gathered in. And this will come from the family of King Chizkiyahu...

### Chapters 13-14: The Fall of Babylon

- A New Section: Chapters 13-23 – The Fall of Ten Foes
- Themes
  - Gd reshapes the universe, sending warriors against Babylon
  - The marauders will be cruel
  - This will lead to redemption for the Jews eiled by arrogant Babylon
- Question: Who is Yeshayah's audience in Chapters 13-23?

14. Erel Segal, **נבואות פורענות על הגויים**, <http://www.tora.us.fm/tnk1/nvia/msaot.html>

תשובה כללית לשאלה (ע"פ שיעור של ניצן, שבת נח"ת שבט ה'תשס"ד) היא, שהנבואות באות ללמד אותנו שד' שולט בכל הגויים ומשגיח עליהם. באותה תקופה, האמונה הרווחת היתה, שלכל עם יש "קל [חול?] לאומי", שמשגיח רק עליו; כדי להרחיק אותנו מהמחשבה הזאת, נתן ד' לנביאים נבואות על כל העמים המוכרים לעם ישראל, וכך לימד את עם ישראל שהוא משגיח על כל העולם ולא רק עליהם... בימי ישעיהו, היה עם ישראל מחולק למפלגות, וכל מפלגה רצתה לכרות ברית עם אחד מעמי הסביבה... מטרת המשאות היא, להראות לכל המפלגות שכולן טועות, כי כל העמים יאבדו, ואין טעם לכרות איתם ברית, אלא רק לסמוך על ד'.

An overall answer [for all biblical prophecies upon non-Jewish nations] to the question (based on a lecture by Nitzan) is that the prophecies come to teach us that Gd rules all of the nations and supervises them. At that time, the popular belief was that each nation has a "national god" who only supervises that nation. To distance that thought, Gd gave the prophets prophecies upon all of the nations known to the Jews, and so Gd taught the Jews that He supervises the entire world, and not only them...

In the days of Yeshayah, Israel was divided into parties, each party wishing to execute a pact with one of the regional nations... The goal of these *masa'ot* was to demonstrate to all of the parties that they were in error. All of the nations will fall, and there is no reason to execute a pact with them, but only to rely upon Gd.

### Chapter 14b: Fall of the Philistines

- After a long, back-and-forth history, they join the Syro-Ephraimite Alliance
- Uziyahu is dead, but Chizkiyahu will defeat the Philistines

### Chapters 15-16: Fall of Moav

- Interweaving historic Moav and contemporary Moav
- Themes
  - Moav's cities and land are in ruins, and the people grieve
  - A message regarding refugees – but what is the message?
    - Moav should flee to us, and we will shelter them (Malbim)
    - An offer of reciprocal shelter from the Assyrians (Ibn Ezra)
    - We helped you when you were refugees, now you should help us
  - Moav has three years to go
- Question: Does Yeshayah actually cry for Moav?

15. Rabbi Zev Wolf Torbavitz, Ziv Mishneh to Rambam's Hilchot Tefilah 12:15

"הבוחר בנביאים טובים", היא ברכה על הנביאים עצמן, ומשה רבינו ע"ה אב הנביאים ג"כ בכללם. ואנו מברכים לד' יתברך על שבחר בהם בהיותם רועים טובים ורחמנים, כי משה רבינו וכל הנביאים כולם מסרו נפשם על ישראל, וגם בעד האומות אמר ישעיה הנביא ע"ה "לבי למואב יזעק" (ישעיה ט"ו) וכדאמר חז"ל. וגם באנו לשלול בזה נביאי השקר אשר התעו את ישראל ולא חמלו עליהם אשר לא בחר בהם ד'.

"Who selects good prophets" – this blessing is for the prophets themselves, including Moshe, source of prophets. We bless Hashem for choosing them because they were good and merciful shepherds; Moshe and all of the prophets gave themselves for Israel. For the nations, too, Yeshayah said, "My heart cries out for Moav," as our sages said. We also come to reject the false prophets who misled Israel and did not have mercy upon them; Gd did not choose them.

### Chapters 17-18: Fall of the Syro-Ephraimite Alliance and News for Ethiopia

- Aram and Ephraim are targeted together
- Themes
  - Syria will suffer
  - Ephraim will suffer, and then look to their Creator
  - You reverted to Canaan, and so will the land
  - Ultimately, Assyria will be punished
  - News will reach Ethiopia, and the Jews shall return

### Chapters 19-20: Fall and Reform of Egypt, and Yeshayah's 3-Year Prediction

- Egypt: Were we supposed to be friends?
- Themes
  - Don't seek the help of this regional power
  - The Nile-based agriculture will collapse, and Egypt will convert
  - The end of Egypt is nigh
- Questions
  - Does Gd truly consider Egypt and Assyria "His portion"?
  - Did Yeshayah really walk around without clothing for three years?

### Where we are headed

21-23	The rest of the ten predictions of catastrophe, including for a population in Yerushalayim
24-27	A Day of Judgment is coming
28-33	Rebuke for the wicked, salvation for the righteous
34-35	Destruction of Edom
36-39	King Chizkiyahu, the Assyrians and Yeshayah
40	Consolation begins