

TORAHSCOPE
H A F T A R A H
E X H O R T A T I O N S

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Life Examined and Understood
Through the Grid of the Torah

William Mark Huey



TORAHSCOPE

HAFTARAH EXHORTATIONS

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edited by J.K. McKee

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Abbreviation Chart and Special Terms

Special terms unique to this publication that may be used have been provided in this chart:

Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	LXX: Septuagint
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	m. Mishnah
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	NIV: New International Version (1984)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
Grk: Greek	RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	t. Tosefta
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)	Tanakh: the Old Testament
Heb: Hebrew	TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
KJV: King James Version	TWOT: <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
	YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

Annual Torah Reading Schedule

These are the weekly Torah and Haftarah portions, as employed in both the traditional Synagogue and today's Messianic Jewish congregations

KEY:

A: Ashkenazic S: Sephardic*

[] denote differences between traditional Jewish and Christian verse order

GENESIS

Bereisheet "In the beginning"

Genesis 1:1-6:8

Isaiah 42:5-43:10 (A); 42:5-21 (S)

Lekh-Lekha "Get yourself out"

Genesis 12:1-17:27

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Chayei Sarah "Sarah's life"

Genesis 23:1-25:18

1 Kings 1:1-31

V'yeitzei "He went out"

Genesis 28:10-32:2

Hosea 12:12-14:10 (A); 11:7-12:12 (S)

V'yishev "He continued living"

Genesis 37:1-40:23

Amos 2:6-3:8

V'yigash "He approached"

Genesis 44:18-47:27

Ezekiel 37:15-28

Noach "Noah"

Genesis 6:9-11:32

Isaiah 54:1-55:5 (A); 54:1-10 (S)

V'yeira "He appeared"

Genesis 18:1-22:24

2 Kings 4:1-37 (A); 4:1-23 (S)

Toldot "History"

Genesis 25:19-28:9

Malachi 1:1-2:7

V'yishlach "He sent"

Genesis 32:3-36:43

Hosea 11:7-12:12 (A); Obadiah 1:1-21 (S)

Mikkeitz "At the end"

Genesis 41:1-44:17

1 Kings 3:15-4:1

V'yechi "He lived"

Genesis 47:28-50:26

1 Kings 2:1-12

EXODUS

Shemot "Names"

Exodus 1:1-6:1

Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23 (A);

Jeremiah 1:2-3 (S)

Bo "Go"

Exodus 10:1-13:16

Jeremiah 46:13-28

Yitro "Jethro"

Exodus 18:1-20:23[26]

Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6[6-7] (A); 6:1-13 (S)

V'eira "I appeared"

Exodus 6:2-9:35

Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

B'shalach "After he had let go"

Exodus 13:17-17:16

Judges 4:4-5:31 (A); 5:1-31 (S)

Mishpatim "Rulings"

Exodus 21:1-24:18

Jeremiah 34:8-22; 33:25-26

* Ashkenazic Jews are largely those from Eastern and Northern Europe, and Sephardic Jews are largely those from Spain and Muslim lands.

Terumah “Contribution”

Exodus 25:1-27:19

1 Kings 5:26-6:13

Ki Tisa “When you take”

Exodus 30:11-34:35

1 Kings 18:1-39 (A); 18:20-39 (S)

Pequdei “Accounts”

Exodus 38:21-40:38

1 Kings 7:51-8:21 (A); 7:40-50 (S)

Tetzaveh “You shall command”

Exodus 27:20-30:10

Ezekiel 43:10-27

V'yak'heil “He assembled”

Exodus 35:1-38:20

1 Kings 7:40-50 (A); 7:13-26 (S)

LEVITICUS**Vayikra** “He called”

Leviticus 1:1-5:26[6:7]

Isaiah 43:21-44:23

Shemini “Eighth”

Leviticus 9:1-11:47

2 Samuel 6:1-7:17 (A); 6:1-19 (S)

Metzora “Leper”

Leviticus 14:1-15:33

2 Kings 7:3-20

Kedoshim “Holy Ones”

Leviticus 19:1-20:27

Amos 9:7-15 (A); Ezekiel 20:2-20 (S)

B'har “On Mount”

Leviticus 25:1-26:2

Jeremiah 32:6-27

Tzav “Give an order”

Leviticus 6:1[8]-8:36

Jeremiah 7:21-8:3; 9:22-23

Tazria “She conceives”

Leviticus 12:1-13:59

2 Kings 4:42-5:19

Acharei Mot “After the death”

Leviticus 16:1-18:30

Ezekiel 22:1-19 (A); 22:1-16 (S)

Emor “Speak”

Leviticus 21:1-24:23

Ezekiel 44:15-31

B'chuqotai “By My regulations”

Leviticus 26:3-27:34

Jeremiah 16:19-17:24

NUMBERS**Bamidbar** “In the wilderness”

Numbers 1:1-4:20

Hosea 2:1-22

Beha'alot'kha “When you set up”

Numbers 8:1-12:16

Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Korach “Korah”

Numbers 16:1-18:32

1 Samuel 11:14-12:22

Balak “Balak”

Numbers 22:2-25:9

Micah 5:6-6:8

Naso “Take”

Numbers 4:21-7:89

Judges 13:2-25

Shelakh-Lekha “Send on your behalf”

Numbers 13:1-15:41

Joshua 2:1-24

Chukat “Regulation”

Numbers 19:1-22:1

Judges 11:1-33

Pinchas “Phinehas”

Numbers 25:10-30:1[29:40]

1 Kings 18:46-19:21

Mattot “Tribes”
Numbers 30:2[1]-32:42
Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

Mas’ei “Stages”
Numbers 33:1-36:13
Jeremiah 2:4-28; 3:4 (A);
2:4-28; 4:1-2 (S)

DEUTERONOMY

Devarim “Words”
Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22
Isaiah 1:1-27

V’et’chanan “And I besought”
Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11
Isaiah 40:1-26

Ekev “Because”
Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25
Isaiah 49:14-51:3

Re’eih “See”
Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17
Isaiah 54:11-55:5

Shoftim “Judges”
Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9
Isaiah 51:12-52:12 (or finish at 53:12)

Ki-Teitzei “When you go out”
Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19
Isaiah 54:1-10 (or finish at 52:13)

Ki-Tavo “When you come”
Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8
Isaiah 60:1-22

Nitzavim “Standing”
Deuteronomy 29:9[10]-30:20
Isaiah 61:10-63:9

V’yeilekh “He went”
Deuteronomy 31:1-30
Hosea 14:2-10; Micah 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-27

Ha’azinu “Hear”
Deuteronomy 32:1–52
2 Samuel 22:1–22:51

V’zot Ha’berakhah “This is the blessing”
Deuteronomy 33:1–34:12
Joshua 1:1–18 (A); 1:1-9 (S)

The current Torah and Haftarah reading dates, are available online
via the Outreach Israel Ministries website: www.outreachisrael.net

INTRODUCTION

Since 2002, Outreach Israel Ministries has been faithfully offering a commentary on the weekly Torah portions. I know that this has been very useful to the diverse groups of Messianic Believers that we reach out to around the world, who appreciate our balanced approach in wanting to bring unity to Jews and non-Jews, focusing our attention on the work of the Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus) and the restoration of the Body of Messiah. As beneficial as it has been for me to direct our studies every week to the Torah, there is a strong need for today's Messianics to diversify their Biblical pursuits and consider more from the Scriptures. This has led and motivated me to compile a series of exhortations on the complimentary Haftarah reading associated with each Torah *parashah*. I want each of us to be instructed from the Prophets and Writings, and to be more consciously considering the great treasure of God's Word every week!

What I have discovered, from any person who is committed to examining the weekly Torah portion, is that once you begin to seriously study and reflect upon Moses' Teaching (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), you naturally have an inclination to want to enhance what you have learned. The Torah makes up the foundation of the Holy Writ, but by no means is the whole of the Holy Writ. Even though traditional Judaism understandably focuses much of its weekly and yearly attention to the annual Torah cycle, Rabbis throughout the centuries have known that having some additional resources to draw upon is most critical. We need to all consider it a great blessing that there is an associated text from the Haftarah that we can derive additional spiritual insight and direction from.

What is the Haftarah? The Hebrew term *haftarah* (הַפְּטָרָה) means "conclusion" or "concluding portion." Normally, it is a short lesson given from the Prophets and the Writings which is thematically connected to something encountered in the weekly Torah portion. While the custom of publicly reading the Torah on a regular basis is easily traced to the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon (Ezra 7:10; Nehemiah 8:1-3)—who did not want to disobey the Lord and be cast into exile again—there are a variety of proposals as to how the custom of regularly considering a section from the Prophets and Writings developed. While access to the Prophets and Writings, and consideration of their spiritual messages, was something always available to the Jewish people in synagogues—it was probably not until the Maccabean crisis of the Second Century B.C.E.ⁱ that circumstances required these Scriptures to take on new importance.ⁱⁱ Ronald L. Eisenberg summarizes,

"Most scholars believe that the custom of adding a prophetic section after the Torah reading dates back to the days before the Hasmonean revolt of 167 B.C.E., when Antiochus

ⁱ Consult the *Messianic Winter Holiday Helper* by Messianic Apologetics for a selection of articles on the Maccabean crisis and the development of *Chanukah* as a national holiday for the Jewish people.

ⁱⁱ Speaking of Judah Maccabee, 2 Maccabees 15:9 describes, "Encouraging them from the law and the prophets, and reminding them also of the struggles they had won, he made them the more eager."

Epiphanes issued a decree banning the public reading of the Torah. Since other public readings in the synagogue were still permitted, the Rabbis added the reading of prophetic verses that related directly or indirectly to the topic of the Torah reading scheduled for that week.^{miii}

Interestingly enough, the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) actually contain the earliest evidence attesting to the reading of a Haftarah selection, as Yeshua read from the scroll of Isaiah on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16-21), and Paul likewise was asked to deliver a report after the Law and the Prophets had been read (Acts 13:15). For any Messianic Believer who wants to see Yeshua “in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44), the need for us to be regularly considering the weekly Haftarah should be obvious. To read from the Haftarah is to do yet another thing that Yeshua did!

It is my fervent prayer that by expanding your review and contemplation of the Haftarah from the Prophets and Writings that your walk with the Lord will be further enlivened. I hope that these exhortations will be used to add even more depth to your understanding of His Word and plan for the ages, as we all seek to be effective Messianic Believers in God’s service today. With the Torah serving as our foundation, the Prophets and Writings continue to give us key instructions in how we can be fully blessed by our Heavenly Father. The commentary I offer you has been compiled specifically so you can achieve all things in Yeshua HaMashiach, the Savior of Israel. *To Him we give all the glory!*

May these exhortations from the Haftarah be used to encourage you to seek Him and His righteousness even further!

Until the restoration of all things....

William Mark Huey
Director, Outreach Israel Ministries

^{miii} Ronald L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 457.

An alternate opinion is offered by Avigdor Shinan, “The Bible in the Synagogue,” in Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp 1932-1933, where he suggests that the decision to add a Haftarah selection from the Prophets, to the weekly Torah reading, was done as a polemic against the Samaritans who rejected the prophetic books.

COMMENTARY ON GENESIS HAFTARAH

Haftarah Bereisheet "Israel: The Light from Darkness!"

Isaiah 42:5-43:10 (A); 42:5-21 (S)

The recipients of the revelation from the Creator God, read in the opening few verses of Genesis, that the first recorded spoken words of the Almighty are: "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). Hovering over a formless and void Earth that was part of an earlier-created cosmos (Genesis 1:1), the omniscient Holy One knew that light was necessary for His Creation to proceed through time according to His preordained plans. He understood that light, as opposed to the absence of light, allowed Him to make a distinction between the light and the darkness—as it ultimately was divided into day and night (Genesis 1:14-19). He also foresaw a group of people who in the future would be declared a "light to the nations" in order to significantly share with humanity at large not only His ways, but Himself as the One True Creator God.

Fast forward to the words of the Prophet Isaiah, and we see that concept of "light" (Heb. *or*, אור) is used to describe a critical role for Israel as God's chosen people. Of all the nations that came forth from the union of Adam and Eve, there was always going to be one nation which was formed to be a "light" to the other nations. In God's plan for the world, in eternity past, He formulated the strategy of eventually selecting one nation among the others with the obligation to speak of the light of their understanding about Him, sharing His goodness with the other nations. A part of what that light would be is mentioned in the opening chapters of Genesis, as Eve is promised that her seed would crush the serpent:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; **He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel**" (Genesis 3:15).

The light of revelation about the Creator and Israel's (intended) righteous status before Him was not simply for the sake of Israel's being chosen—but was to open the blind eyes of the prisoners encased in the darkness of their sin. The Prophet Isaiah declares,

"Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it, 'I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and **I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations**, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison" (Isaiah 42:5-7; cf. Luke 2:32).

The responsibility placed upon Israel to be a witness for the Most High is reiterated at the end of this week's Haftarah selection. Not being a light to the nations is just as bad as disobeying the commandments of God in the Torah. His people are without excuse if they do not fulfill their role as His representatives on Earth. After all, from God's perspective, some chosen nation needs to explain and enlighten the rest of the world—people who are all in relative darkness—about who He is:

“All the nations have gathered together so that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this and proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified, or let them hear and say, “It is true.” **You are My witnesses,’ declares the LORD, ‘And My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me”** (Isaiah 43:9-10).

The concept of Israel being a light to the nations is understood centuries later by the Apostle Paul, who recognized his personal role as a steward of the mysteries of God. Paul recognized that the mystery of God had unfolded from just general promises about Israel being a light, to now being a bearer of the good news about Yeshua the Messiah and His redemptive work as the Light of the World (John 8:12). He wrote the Believers in Corinth about being found worthy of the calling to be God's servants, teaching those in darkness about the mysteries of God. In view of our modern-day responsibilities, Paul's words of admonition are quite sobering to those who are taking their walk with the Messiah seriously:

“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Messiah and **stewards of the mysteries of God**. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, **but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts**; and then each man's praise will come to him from God” (1 Corinthians 4:1-5).

Everyone who claims to be a part of God's people needs to remember that ultimately, whether we are corporately the light to the nations, or whether we are individually declaring the work of Yeshua—the Light of the World—all of our acts are going to be brought to light by the Lord Himself. Whatever our motives are, whatever is hidden in our hearts, will be revealed by the light of the Holy One. He will bring light to all that is hidden in our hearts, especially if some things are darkened by the deceitfulness of sin! Let those motives brought to light be found to be holy and righteous, as opposed to evil.

Does this give you another perspective on your role as a “light to the nations”? What are your motives for pointing other people to the Messiah? Or Torah study? Or Haftarah exhortations? How are you handling the mysteries of God as they have been revealed to you? Are you able to handle them with the skill and eloquence becoming of someone transformed by the gospel?

When it is all said and done, will God reward you? Or will you be among those who thought they knew Him, but in the end were merely using His name for dark and deceitful purposes? These are the people who thought they knew the Light, but their motives were actually hidden by the darkness in their hearts. Yeshua's warning to us on this matter is quite clear:

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS’” (Matthew 7:22-23; cf. Psalm 6:8).

Being a part of Israel requires responsibility. *We are to be God’s light to the nations.* Take this very seriously as you bring your light into this darkened world—to those in search of answers to the mysteries of God!

Haftarah Noah **“Walking by Faith”**

Isaiah 54:1-55:5 (A); 54:1-10 (S)

The cataclysmic Flood described in *Noah* (Genesis 6:9-11:32) is undoubtedly the most memorable event that most of you will be considering this week. However, it is the post-deluge Noahic Covenant that God unilaterally established with Noah and his progeny, which is reflected upon by the Prophet Isaiah as he attempted to encourage his contemporaries in Ancient Judah. Ultimately, it is the reference to a “covenant of peace” that the Holy One unilaterally instituted with His people, which is something worthy of shouting for joy.

If you will recall, God was so aggravated with the corrupt and violent direction of the human race that He had to destroy all the people of the Earth, except Noah and his immediate family:

“Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth’” (Genesis 6:11-13).

Further illumination about how an angry God was going to handle evil in the future is recorded after righteous Noah offered up sacrifices to Him as the Flood waters recede. Note that God declared what the evil heart of humanity is, promising to extend grace even though He knew unrighteousness would continue among people:

“Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, **‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease’**” (Genesis 8:20-22).

In a comparative manner, the blessing that God would never forsake Israel is what Isaiah describes as he foresaw and understood the brief moment in time when the Lord in His anger, would hide His face from His idolatrous people, allowing the Babylonian exile to take place. However, as this section of the prophecy declares, the punishment upon Israel would only be temporary. After briefly forsaking His people, He would eventually restore them with great compassion:

“For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of *one's* youth when she is rejected,’ says your God. **‘For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,’ says the LORD your Redeemer.** ‘For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,’ says the LORD who has compassion on you” (Isaiah 54:5-10).

Here, Isaiah looks back to the ancient Flood in Noah’s time—and then into the future when an eternal covenant of peace will be instituted and never be shaken. These verses are promises that the Jewish people have held onto for millennia. Down through the centuries, whether sent off to Babylon or dispersed into the nations after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, these words have always brought great comfort and hope to many people. We eagerly look forward to their fulfillment some time in the future!

A few verses later, Isaiah describes not only Israel being established in righteousness, but the promise that the Almighty is sovereign over the affairs of His Creation. He not only creates the circumstances that refine His people, but He assures them that no weapon formed against them will prosper:

“In righteousness you will be established; you will be far from oppression, for you will not fear; and from terror, for it will not come near you. If anyone fiercely assails *you* it will not be from Me. Whoever assails you will fall because of you. **Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and brings out a weapon for its work; and I have created the destroyer to ruin. No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.** This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their vindication is from Me,’ declares the LORD” (Isaiah 54:14-17).

For Believers today, it is extremely comforting to know that the immutable Creator is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He does not change and His promises remain forever. “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6).

As our Haftarah reading concludes, the first six verses of Isaiah 55 also remind us that another unilateral covenant, one established with King David, is something that God’s people can look to in order to recognize that the Almighty always keeps His word and promises. This everlasting covenant ultimately points us to the Son of David—our Messiah Yeshua—who will one day rule and reign from Zion over the whole world (cf. 2 Samuel 7:12-17):

“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. **Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David.** Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you,

because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.’ **Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near**” (Isaiah 55:1-6).

I have one, very interesting final thought. As you come to the end of this passage, Isaiah states that Israel **“will call a nation you do not know”** and **“a nation which knows you not will run to you.”** What is Isaiah talking about? Is it an ancient nation, or one that during his time did not even exist? Is it possible that Isaiah is referring to a modern-day nation or is he looking into the Millennial Kingdom? Is this a reference to Isaiah’s expectation of the restoration of Israel *involving more than just Israel* (Isaiah 49:6)?

The key to answering these questions may only come at that future time when Israel has finally been glorified. In that glorified state, the people will be seeking the Lord and calling upon Him while He is near. Let us make sure that we are all a part of this restoration, something which requires us to diligently follow Yeshua and obey our Heavenly Father. When we all arrive in His Kingdom, there are doubtlessly going to be many unknown things that He will finally reveal to us!

Our challenge in the meantime is to be a people who seek that place of glorification, recognizing that no matter how far we fall short in our pursuit of Him, God will never forsake us or leave us (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5). He will eventually and unilaterally bring us into His eternal covenant of peace. Such has been God’s promised pattern for dealing with His people since the days of Noah. **May the Holy One hasten the day when His covenant of peace is finally realized!**

Haftarah Lekh-Lekha **“Choices That Renew Our Strength”**

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Lekh-Lekha (Genesis 12:1-17:27), our Torah portion for this week, begins by familiarizing the reader with the exploits of the great Patriarch Abraham. In Romans 4 the Apostle Paul later described him as the father of the faithful. While Abraham is noted for his faith in the Almighty, we need not overlook the declared promise of God to bless those who bless Abraham, or contrarily to curse those who curse Abraham. Many of his physical descendants and spiritual onlookers down through the centuries have claimed to build their personal faith and trust in the God of Creation based on His dealings with Abraham:

“And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

Did you note in this often-quoted phrase, which delineates blessings and curses to Abraham’s respective benefactors or enemies—**that God also says that in Abraham that all of the families of the Earth will be blessed?** Is it possible that this reference is to the literal Seed of Abraham who would one day arrive as the Messiah Yeshua Himself? It is absolutely true that Paul appealed to Genesis 12:3 in Galatians 3:8, saying, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, ‘ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.’” The ultimate blessing for all of humanity is the Redeemer and His accomplished work at Golgotha (Calvary). About eighteen-hundred years after the promise was made to Abraham, the

blood sacrifice required to atone for the sin of humanity is completed. There can be no greater blessing for all the families of the Earth!

However, about seven centuries prior to the crucifixion, the words of the Prophet Isaiah to Ancient Judah—now considered in conjunction with *Lekh-Lekha*—were delivered to a people who would be in exile. **Isaiah declares the eternal promises of God, and the choice that He has made to be faithful to His people who follow the patterns established by the life of Abraham.** Just consider how the words of Isaiah 40:28-31, another frequently quoted set of verses, are great reminders of the faithfulness of God to His chosen nation of priests:

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to *him who* lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary” (Isaiah 40:28-31).

Isaiah provokes his audience by asking simple rhetorical questions that force them to remember just who it is they are serving. *He is an everlasting God, the Creator of the Universe—One who does not contend with human frailties evidenced in either weariness or being tired.* Instead, the Lord actually gives strength to the weary and gives power to the tired. Even the youth who become tired and weary are given new strength. In fact, as Isaiah waxes eloquent with poetic terms, he describes people gaining enough strength like an eagle that soars high above or those who run without getting tired or walk without being weary.

How many times have you turned to these verses when you needed a lift as the challenges of life may have weighed you down? Have you ever meditated about soaring like an eagle above all of your cares and troubles, giving such cares and troubles over to your Heavenly Father?

Likewise, have you also reminded yourself of *your* inherited blessings promised to Abraham by our Creator? Are there times when you have been subjected to curses or cursing, and you simply remind yourself that because you are one who worships the God of Abraham that anyone who casts ill intentions your way will have to contend with the omniscient Creator?

As you read through the balance of our Haftarah portion as it extends into Isaiah 41, you should note that Isaiah repeatedly reminds his audience of just who it is they serve. The Lord is the one who is the first and the last:

“Who has performed and accomplished *it*, calling forth the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He’” (Isaiah 41:4; cf. Revelation 22:13).

Notice the similarity to the promise made to Abraham about being blessed in this passage, versus what God will do to those who contend with Israel:

“But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend, you whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts and said to you, **‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.** Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish” (Isaiah 41:8-11).

Also be reminded that God continues to admonish His people that we are not to fear. After all, the Holy One is our Helper and Redeemer:

“For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, who says to you, **‘Do not fear, I will help you. Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,’** declares the LORD, **‘and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.** Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; you will thresh the mountains and pulverize *them*, and will make the hills like chaff. You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, and the storm will scatter them; but you will rejoice in the LORD, you will glory in the Holy One of Israel!” (Isaiah 41:13-16).

The concluding statements in this passage relate that Israel will be like a thresher which will chew up those who oppose them. This is a critical part of Israel’s destiny before the other nations of the Earth. Ultimately in being God’s instrument to declare His glory to the nations, Israel will naturally rejoice and glory in Him.

Of course the ultimate declarations come when His people went forth after the resurrection of His Son, declaring the good news of the accomplished work of the Messiah. Everything that God has purposed for His people in ancient times, He is accomplishing through them to this very day! Let us rejoice in not only the blessings, but confidently rest in God’s plan for the ages, trusting in His choice. After all, He continues to renew our strength and faith in order to proclaim Yeshua to our family, our neighbors, our fellow workers, and with whomever else we encounter who needs His love.

Let us thank the Lord for not only choosing us, but renewing our strength—so that *we* can choose to share Him with others!

Haftarah V'yeira "Hospitality Blessings"

2 Kings 4:1-37 (A); 4:1-23 (S)

As you ponder this week’s Haftarah reading and contemplate why the ancient Sages attached it to *V'yeira* (Genesis 18:1-22:24), the connective reasons appear to be the two common threads of hospitality and the blessings of offspring. In the case of the account of Elisha and the Shunammite woman, and Abraham and the Divine messengers, there is every indication that both were inherently hospitable without any hidden motivation to receive anything for their hospitable acts. There is a suggestion that the woman perceived that Elisha was a holy man of God, and we do know that Abraham showed reverence for the three men when he bowed before them.

Reacquaint yourself with these two complimentary passages, and note that between Elisha, and earlier the Divine messengers, that both eventually get around to making a declaration that in approximately one year from their visits—a son would be born to the Shunammite woman, and a son would be born to Sarah:

“Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food. She said to her husband, ‘Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. Please, let us make a

little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, *that* he can turn in there.’ One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested. Then he said to Gehazi his servant, ‘Call this Shunammite.’ And when he had called her, she stood before him. He said to him, ‘Say now to her, “Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the army?”’ And she answered, ‘I live among my own people.’ So he said, ‘What then is to be done for her?’ And Gehazi answered, ‘Truly she has no son and her husband is old.’ He said, ‘Call her.’ When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. **Then he said, ‘At this season next year you will embrace a son.’** And she said, ‘No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant.’ The woman conceived and bore a son at that season the next year, as Elisha had said to her” (2 Kings 4:8-17).

“Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, and said, ‘My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant.’ And they said, ‘So do, as you have said.’ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, ‘Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead *it* and make bread cakes.’ Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave *it* to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it. He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed *it* before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate. Then they said to him, ‘Where is Sarah your wife?’ And he said, ‘There, in the tent.’ **He said, ‘I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.’** And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’ And the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, “Shall I indeed bear *a child*, when I am *so old*?” Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.’ Sarah denied *it* however, saying, ‘I did not laugh’; for she was afraid. And He said, ‘No, but you did laugh” (Genesis 18:1-15).

While some might want to conclude that you are *only* to be hospitable to godly or holy people in order to receive the blessings of the Lord, the balance of the Holy Scriptures actually indicate that hospitality should be a common trait of all who serve Him. The Apostolic Scriptures are replete with telling us that the gift of hospitality, or simply being hospitable, is a recognizable attribute of a godly person. Consider the following statements from the Apostles, as you sort out in your mind the blessings of being hospitable:

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, **practicing hospitality**” (Romans 12:9-13).

Love without hypocrisy practices hospitality to the saints. Additionally, according to Paul, hospitality must be an attribute of the overseers of the assembly: