

**Chapter-by-Chapter Summary of the book of
Yeshaya (Isaiah)**
from
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Chapter One

Verses 1-9

Despite God's special involvement in their birth and the many benefits of His attention, the Jewish nation has not lived up to His expectations. Their repeated suffering through a difficult history – all designed to remind them of their true task – has failed to evoke an appropriate national moral regeneration. Only God's patience and kindness has allowed their survival until today.

Verses 10-15

Performance of Temple sacrifice and festival observance have not and will not solve the problem as long as they aren't indicators of true personal improvement and twinned with social justice and morality.

Verses 16-20

Fixing the problem will require an active campaign of public education and a willingness among the powerful to take up, when necessary, the case of the poor and powerless. The nation (and particularly its leaders) must also engage in an internal analysis of their actions to ensure that they are in line with God's expectations.

Verses 21-23

Self-interest and excessive desire for riches among the powerful blinds them to the needs of the vulnerable and leads to deceitful business activities.

Verses 24-31

God will forcibly cleanse the nation of the corrupt – they will wither and disappear – and elevate decent and judicious leaders in their place.

Note: The navi in this chapter is clearly talking about people we would identify as religiously observant (they come to the Mikdash and observe Shabbos and Yom Tov) and yet their lifestyles are still labeled abhorrent in God's eyes. External observance simply isn't enough.

Chapter Two

Verses 1-5

Despite the disgraceful abuse of the Temple and its service described in the previous chapter, the time will again come (at the end of days) when even the nations will willingly seek its glory and submit to Torah rule. This submission will lead to the end of war and an international urging of the Jews themselves to rise to their exalted task.

Verses 6-8

Perhaps as a result of a wealth-induced moral decline (verse 7), the Jewish people has fallen into the corrupt ways of their pagan neighbors – including intermarriage and idolatry.

Verses 9-17

The nation's consequent downfall – especially that of the rich and powerful – is certain, leaving no other rational choice but to desperately seek emergency shelter for the coming, Divinely-

inspired social upheavals. Their main goal would seem to be to inspire a return to humility – both personal and communal.

Verses 18-23

Again the Jews are advised to seek emergency shelter while God will eliminate their helpless idols and restore a recognition of His exclusive rule over the world.

Chapter Three

Verses 1 – 7

The warning that God will allow, as punishment, the loss of all the nation's leaders and support institutions, leaving us in the hands of grossly unqualified replacements.

Verses 8 – 16

The causes for this particular punishment (and, seemingly, that which follows): the perversion of justice (judicial favoritism), the embracing of unsuited leaders (the morally insensitive and women) and a communal descent into debauchery.

Verses 17 – 26

The warning that God will remove the many items of luxury and seduction abused particularly by women, replacing them with symbols of suffering and want.

Sources

Chagiga 14 (1-3)

Chapter Four

The blend of danger and glory that tzadikim will encounter during the epochal transition to the messianic age. the personal attention that God will show through the cleansing of sin.

Sources

Bava Basra 75a (5-6)

Chapter Five

Verses 1-7

The disloyal and ungrateful Ten Tribes are compared to a vineyard planted to perfection but which nevertheless produces poor fruit. The desired – but missing – “fruit” is described as Justice and Righteousness.

Verses 8-23

The causes of God's displeasure are described as including subtle disenfranchisement of the weak (8), willful flight into confused mental states (11-13 and 20-23)

Note Rashi (8) on the repetition of the word “הוּ”.

Verses 24-30 (and 13-16)

A description of how God will not only remove His protection from His errant nation, but will encourage and assist their tormentors.

Note. Many of the major sins described in this chapter (drunkenness, self-induced confusion and ביטול תורה), while serious, demonstrate the very high expectations of this nation and can't

compare to those of any other.

Chapter Six

Verses 1-4

A description of God sitting in judgment (of Israel) in the awesome presence His Court. King Uziya's profaning the Temple (see II Kings 14) was to invoke Divine wrath.

Verses 5-7

Yeshaya, humbled and frightened by what he was seeing, slights his nation's honor and is immediately punished.

Verses 8-13

Yeshaya is given the task of telling Israel of the (virtual?) impossibility of their rising to teshuva before God is left with no choice but destruction and exile.

The Good News

An angel (verse 6) is dispatched to defend Israel's honor despite their deep failings: they obviously are still a most worthy people. Every criticism of them must therefore be understood in that context.

Sources

Chapter Seven

Verses 1-9

Achaz, king of Yehuda, is told of the planned invasion of Yehuda by an allied army from Aram and Israel (the ten northern tribes). Achaz is told to not be in the least concerned with this threat because it will miraculously dissipate before any damage is done (see II Kings 16 and II Divrei Hayomim 28).

Verses 10-16

Achaz is urged to ask God for a miraculous sign that the nation will indeed be protected. He refuses (unwilling, according to Rashi, for God to receive any credit on his account). Nevertheless, the birth of a son to the young wife of either Achaz or Yeshaya was unilaterally designated by God as the sign. It is noteworthy that despite all the difficult times that lay before the Jewish people, assurance is given (verse 14) that the nation will survive along with its special relationship with God.

Verses 17-20

A description of the coming threat and near-total destruction of both Jewish nations at the hand of Sancheriv of Assyria.

Verses 21-25

A description of the miraculous recovery that Yehuda would experience after Sancheriv's fall and the refocusing of priorities the remaining Jews would attempt (see Rashi verse 25).

Chapter Eight

Verses 1-4

Yeshaya is instructed to actively publicize the coming miraculous salvation of Yehuda from enemy invasion (including giving evocative names to his two sons – vs 7: 14 and 8: 3. See also

the first chapter of the prophet Hosheya).

Verses 5-17

Yeshaya personally and the nation in general are warned to remain loyal to the Davidic dynasty (unlike King Chizkiya's minister, Shavna, who defected to the Assyrian side) and abandon their various attractive but futile efforts to find security through foreign alliances and religious compromise (especially the drift away from Torah study and observance). It would seem likely that the very threat the nation faced (as described in chapter seven) are at least partially the result of the Jews' wavering faith in God's chosen government. The powerful allure of these stratagems can be seen from the fact that Yeshaya himself appears drawn to them (see Daas Sofrim to verse 11).

Verses 18-23

Despite the hope for future recovery (verse 18), the immediate circumstances facing the nation – and especially the ten tribes – are grim. Note that verses 19-20 are actually the prophecy of Beri (the father of Hosheya) that were included here since they were too small for their own book.

Chapter Nine

Verses 1-6

A brief interlude (between accounts of the corruption and fate of King Achaz' generation) describing the greatness of King Chizkiya and subsequent fall of Assyria.

Verses 7-11

The arrogant confidence the Ten Tribe's leadership have in their security will lead to a commensurate military humiliation.

Verses 12- 16

The Ten Tribes, ignoring the true, Divine, cause of their suffering, will consequently face a crippling loss of leadership (see also chapter 3, verses 1-7 on the threat of a vacuum in qualified leadership).

Verses 17-20

The troubles afflicting the nation will drive individuals to break even the most basic rules of communal cooperation and coexistence. Note: each of the last three sections (and the first section of chapter ten) ends with the message that even after all this, God did not calm His anger.

Note:

Understanding the specific national flaws described in this chapter requires considerable sensitivity. These are things for which other nations would never be criticized. See for instance verse 12 in which, according to Daas Sofrim, the Jews are criticized not for failing to seek God, but for failing to seek Him with sufficient awareness of His greatness.

Chapter Ten

Verses 1-4

Clearly in direct continuation of the previous chapter, Yeshaya warns wealthy and powerful Jews that their abuse of power – through discreetly defrauding the unwitting and undefended poor – will lead to a catastrophic foreign invasion. Just as with the final three sections of chapter nine, these verses also end with the message that God, even now, has not calmed His anger.

Verses 5-15

The prophet turns his attention to Assyria itself which, so convinced of its own strength, fails to

see that it is nothing but a tool in God's hand meant to fulfill His will towards the Jewish people.
Verses 16-19

A description of the near-total destruction that awaits Assyria (see II Kings 19: 35).

Verses 20-27

Since the Jews of Jerusalem will have recognized the need to return to their reliance on God, they need have no fear of Assyrian invasion (despite the significant destruction that will occur in most other regions of the country).

Verses 28-34

A step-by-step account of the final movements of Sancheriv's Assyrian army before its miraculous destruction.

Chapter Eleven

Verses 1-5

In the wake of the miraculous national rescue from the Assyrian threat and the associated Torah-greatness inspired by King Chizkiya, the final redemption was within reach (see Sanhedrin 94a). The prophet therefore describes the messianic age, beginning with a list of the exalted personal qualities needed by Moshiach himself.

Verses 6-9

Certain changes will accompany the messianic age, particularly world peace (as, apparently, represented by the prophet's description of the pleasant coexistence between various previously antagonistic species of animals and with humans (see Shabbos 63a).

Verses 10-16

The messianic in-gathering of the exiles in both logistical and political terms.

Chapter Twelve

Verse 1-6

The prophet instructs the generation of Moshiach of the appropriate attitudes they should adopt: an acknowledgement that we were the cause of all Divine anger and an awareness that the age of redemption will be accompanied by heightened intellectual/spiritual opportunities.

Note:

Chapter twelve marks the end of the first major unit of the Book of Yeshaya. Until now (according to Daas Sofrim), the Jewish nation itself has been held under a microscope to hold them to account for all their failings. The next eleven chapters will focus on various foreign nations. Stylistically, there will be a notable absence of specific rebuke for some of the more subtle flaws found in Jews. It is likely that these nations would simply have been incapable of absorbing such rebuke. Possible, also, is that these chapters are meant for Jewish consumption so as to inform us of world-events and their causes.

Chapter Thirteen

Verses 1-5

Centuries in advance of the events – even before its rise to power had become clear – the prophet describes God's role in gathering nations together to affect Babylon's utter destruction. Why? Perhaps as a warning to Bavel itself; perhaps to give hope to the Jews that, no matter how bleak their current situation, their salvation was already in preparation; or perhaps to emphasize how His hand is active in guiding the moral and political course of international events.

Verses 6-18

An account of the utter despair and dread that would overwhelm the people of Bavel to the point where the very foundations of the natural world would appear to be shaken (see sources below). The extreme cruelty of the conquerors – in direct response to the depth of Bavel's own corruption – will follow the will of God Himself (verses 11-13).

Verses 19-22

An account of the absolute and permanent destruction of the city of Babylon (see Brachos 57b).

Sources:

See Rambam's More Nevuchim (II, chapter 29) in which he outlines his understanding of prophetic descriptions of gigantic physical changes (those in verse 10, for instance). Reading such passages literally is, in Rambam's opinion, an error. Rather, such exaggerated language is used metaphorically to emphasize the enormity of the events (like the catastrophic downfall of Babylon).

See, on the other hand, Abarbanel who explains the dimming of stars in verse 10 as a symbol of the defeat of both a temporal nation and its celestial, God-appointed patron.

Chapter Fourteen

Verses 1-3

While still more than a century away from national destruction at the hands of Babylon, Yeshaya tells of the eventual end of Nevuchadnetzer's persecution and of the glorious return of the Jews to their homeland.

Verses 4-12

The enemies of Babylon vengefully – and joyfully – eliminate Nevuchadnetzer's empire and see an end to their suffering (verse ten, for instance, describes international disbelief that such an empire could actually fall).

Verses 13-23

The prophet contrasts Nevuchadnetzer's enormous arrogance and the terrible consequences of his cruelty with his great fall. His personal suffering will extend even beyond his death and eventually bring an end to his dynasty.

Verses 24-27

Unopposed, God's plans for each of the world's nations gradually unfold. Alternatively (according to Abarbanel) God will use the destruction of Babylon as a platform to create a Persian empire with which to allow, some decades later, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and reconstitution of the Jewish state.

Verses 28-32

The Philistines, too, will face great suffering – although perhaps on a lighter level than the others (see verse 31 where the threat is described as “smoke” - uncomfortable, but hardly lethal).

Chapters Fifteen

Verses 1-4, 6, 8-9

The imminent destruction of Moav at the hands of Assyria (under the leadership of Sancharev) and Bavel's (Nevuchadnezzar's) later, brutal conquest.

Verse 5

The prophet cries in personal pain over Moav's suffering (here and in 16: 9, 11): the fate of foreign nations does concern Jews.

Verse 7

The cause of Moav's great fall: their refusal to acknowledge and return the historic generosity they had enjoyed from Avraham and his descendants (Rashi, Daas Sofrim).

Chapter Sixteen

Verses 1-5

A natural continuation of chapter fifteen, these verses warn the people Moav of their moral responsibility to protect and support Jews in their times of need.

Verses 6-14

Moav's arrogance (verse 6) and failure to give up their pagan gods (verse 12) will bring about their destruction.

Chapter Seventeen

Verses 1-6

The twinned destructions of Aram (Damascus) and the Northern Jewish Kingdom (Ten Tribes) at the hands of Sancheriv. The navi equates their fates either because both met their end during the same military campaign (Abarbanel) or because of Israel's improper alliance with Aram (Daas Sofrim).

Verses 7-8

Individuals (either from the Northern Kingdom or from Yehuda) will learn from the destruction to rebuild their relationship with God.

Verses 9-11

The early promise and successes of the Jews is contrasted with their later fall and failure.

Verses 12-14

The eventual fall of Sancheriv is described (perhaps so as to soften the pain of the previous message – Rashi).

Chapter Eighteen

Verses 1-3

The remarkable rescue of the Jewish nation from their enemy (Magog, according to Rashi, or Sancheriv, according to others) will cause an international sensation, inspiring great kiddush Hashem as foreign nations send representatives to investigate.

Verses 4-7

The sudden fall – in the midst of their greatest success – of Israel's enemy is contrasted with the steady and constant corrective rebukes that had always been faced by the Jews.

Chapter Nineteen

Verses 1-4

Sancheriv is the agent chosen by God to topple Egypt's existing religious and social structure – causing deep internal unrest and confusion besides direct military damage.

Verses 5-10

Egypt's fall is described in terms (perhaps metaphoric) of the drying of the Nile and the consequent economic turmoil.

Verses 11-16

The famed wisdom of Egypt will fail, bringing about the complete disgrace of the intellectual class (see also verse 3) and a critical weakening of the nation's ability to defend itself.

Verses 17-25

Deeply impressed by Jerusalem's miraculous rescue from Sancheriv, the remnants of Egyptian society will adopt important elements of Torah practices, which will in turn usher in a period of regional peace.

Chapter Twenty

Verses 1-6

With Judah under great threat from Assyria (as Ashdod was actually under Assyrian attack), the Jews turned in desperation to Egypt and Kush for help. The navi is told by God to remove his sackcloth and shoes and, for three years, to travel thus with the message: as Egypt and Kush will soon be marched naked into exile, your hope is surely not with them.

Note:

Abarbanel understands that Yeshaya's instructions, as bizarre as they seemed, were literally carried out – however he was never expected to travel naked but rather in torn and degrading garments. Rambam (More 2: 46) sees the entire episode as a prophetic vision (see Abarbanel's broad and critical analysis and the related commentary of Ramban to Breishis 18: 1). Daas Sofrim reads the passage as instructions for Yeshaya to, from time to time over a period of three years, uncover his sackcloth and remove his shoes (but not that he would actually be naked).

Chapter Twenty-One

Verses 1-5

The navi again (see chapter 13) describes the future destruction of Bavel – this time, however, in the context of its last king: Belshatzar (hence, since Belshatzar was not without positive qualities, the sad tone to Yeshaya's words – Daas Sofrim).

Verses 6-10

The elderly Yeshaya assigns a much younger navi Chabakuk to watch specifically for the prophetic signs of Bavel's end.

Verses 11-12

An ally of Bavel, Edom, faces its own destruction but the Jews could, if they demonstrate their worth, be shielded from the violence.

Verses 13-17

The Arabs, too, face destruction, taking a form similar to the cruelty they had historically inflicted on their Jewish cousins.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Verses 1-13

The Navi describes a Jerusalem that is both vulnerable to foreign invasion and populated by people feeling self-defense either unnecessary or impossible. Facing desperation, laziness or overbearing pride, the Navi exhorts his people to teshuva. These verses could be describing sieges of Ashur, Bavel or perhaps, in general terms, many periods of spiritual/military weakness.

Verses 14-19, 25

Shevna, a powerful Jew (perhaps, according to Rashi, even a high priest) of wavering loyalty, is called to account both for his eventual treason and, significantly, for his ambition and arrogance while still a member of Chizkiya's court.

Verses 20-24

Elyakim ben Chilkياهو is chosen by God as a more appropriate replacement for Shevna.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Verses 1-14

Using language remarkably similar to that previously describing Israel's impending troubles (especially that of the previous chapter – see verses 1, 12 and 14), the destruction of the commercial empire of Tzur (Phoenician Tyre) is predicted. The relatively mild sin of arrogance is hinted (verse 9) – in stark contrast to the far more obvious sins of other nations like Bavel.

Verses 15-17

A period of 70 years of ruin and obscurity is designated, followed by at least a partial reconstruction. Nevertheless, subtly derisive language (see verses 16-17) suggests that Tzur will lack the righteousness and merit to achieve a full return to past glories.

Verse 18

Perhaps as a reflection of Tzur's history of partnership with Israel, their wealth is associated with the greatness of the messianic age.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Verses 1-13

A description of a severe and violent depletion of Israel's population (variously associated with the exile of the Ten Tribes, the loss of either of the Temples in Jerusalem or even the final geula). The prophet warns of a breakdown of social structure (verse 2 according to Rashi – perhaps suggesting that overly rigid and oppressive class distinctions were part of the problem), a muting of a formerly joyous lifestyle (verses. 7-11) and attributes the suffering to the sin of false oaths (verse 6 according to Rashi).

Verses 14-16

The few Jews who survive this destruction will recognize the greatness of God's role in their rescue and lament the suffering that accompanied it.

Verses 17-23

Nations who stood in the way of God's plans for His people will be unable to escape their fate – even their heavenly “guides” will be punished (verse 21).

Chapter Twenty-Five

Verses 1-7

At the end of history, with the Jewish nation seemingly at the edge of destruction (verse 6), God will strip Israel's hostile enemies of their power and security (to the ongoing relief of His long-suffering nation – verse 4).

Verses 8-9

The Jewish people, finally freed both from the fear of death and the vilification of the outside world, will openly rejoice in their close ties with God.

Verses 10-12

Moav, an ancient enemy of Israel, will face God's crippling vengeance.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Verses 1-4

The Jewish nation remains loyal to their God through the exile – ever mindful that He is their only source of assistance.

Verses 5-11

Confident that the righteous will eventually be vindicated in this world, Israel expresses their fervent desire to see the mighty brought down and for real justice to become easily apparent.

Verses 12-17

The navi claims that the Jews have already paid for their failings and have remained loyal even under intense pressure; they, uniquely, have been grateful for all Divine kindness, accepted rebuke and sought to grow from adversity in ways unheard of among the other nations of the world.

Verses 18-19

The Jews, sensing the very edge of redemption, beg that their fallen tzadikim should be brought back to life.

Verses 20-21

God answers: go, return to your appointed tasks, for God's redemption is indeed at hand.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Verses 1-3

At the end of history, God will gradually bring down each of the powerful nations which had blocked His will.

Verses 4-9

The settling of scores won't be complete however until the Jews remove idolatry (verse nine) and learn to internalize the key lesson from their history: that God possesses singular power to control human activities; that He is their only true hope (verses 5-8).

Verses 10-13

God, at this time, will weaken and eventually force hostile nations into releasing their captive Jews who will return to Israel from every corner of their exile.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Verses 1-4

Both the enormous unrealized potential and spectacular downfall of the Ten Tribes are used to illustrate a warning to Yehuda: this could just as easily happen to you as well so take care to avoid being unduly influenced by your northern cousins.

Note: when assessing the navi's charge of drunkenness, one must consider Avos 3: 3 (Rabbi Shimon's statement about three men sitting together without sharing Torah thoughts). Perhaps, in the navi's terms, any unclear thinking concerning serious matters is the relative equivalent of lowly drunkenness (Daas Sofrim).

Verses 5-15

Elements of the dangerous qualities ascribed to the North are now found in Yehuda itself. If large segments of even the intellectual Torah community use rationalizations to justify their imperviousness to God's message (i.e., providing "alternatives" to every Torah principle and command – verse 10 – and imagining themselves beyond the reach of death and disaster – verse 15), who then will remain sober and clear-headed enough to properly lead?

Verses 16-21

The navi tells the Jews that their visions of security are delusional and that, while moshiach is to be sent (see Rashi to verse 16) a fierce fate awaits them.

Verses 22-29

The educational and surgically precise nature of God's punishment is described. Not only are we to suffer, but we must understand why (verse 23) and we must realize that while God is patient,

He will not wait forever (verse 24 in which He is compared to a farmer who, while spending good time plowing his field, will eventually have to give up if the opportunity to seed never arrives).

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Verses 1-4

The siege and suffering of Jerusalem – and, particularly, the altar – are described along with the helplessness of its people.

Verses 5-8

All the murderous dreams of Israel's enemies will prove no more than a dream when God will exact His revenge through their destruction. This is likely referring to the fate met by Sanchriv and his armies at the gates of Jerusalem.

Verses 9-16

In an apparent change of theme, The navi describes the Jews' spiritual blindness as they (sometimes frantically) search for practices and philosophies to hide their neglect of Torah responsibilities even from themselves – all of which leads to yet more blindness as wise men's wisdom is taken from them. This self-delusion sometimes takes the form of largely superficial observance of the Torah's laws.

Verses 17-24

The day is yet to come on which proper Torah vision will be restored to those deserving of it and those who sought to sow confusion among Jews will be brought to justice.

Chapter Thirty

Verses 1-7

The navi criticizes the Jews (in the time of Hoshea ben Eila, II Kings 17 - Rashi) for seeking protection from Egypt – especially without consulting God first. Their effort and investment in this endeavor will be of no practical use as Egypt can and will offer them no help.

Verses 8-17

The nation's leaders (see Daas Sofrim) are accused of willfully rejecting God's position on questions of national security. Their reliance on foreign protection and the temporal power of military resources will end in collapse and ignominious defeat.

Verses 18-26

While some punishment will be unavoidable, those faithful to God will again enjoy prosperity – though without the corruption of excess (verse 20). Verse 26 seems likely to primarily refer to the increased goodness reserved for the messianic age.

Verses 27-32

Ashur (Assyria), whose threat inspired the Jews' attempts to enlist Egyptian support, will face their deserved punishment at God's hands, sparking great rejoicing and a restoration of full festival observance.

Verse 33

A rare description of the punishment awaiting the evil in Gehinnom.

Chapter Thirty-One

Verses 1-4

Following the Northern Kingdom's decision to approach Egypt for military support (according to Daas Sofrim, the subject of chapter thirty was the lead up to that decision), the weak and

fruitless alliance is contrasted to God's power and reliability...had He only been asked.

Verses 5-7

Pending appropriate teshuva, God is described as eager and quick to defend Israel and punish its enemies.

Verses 8-9

Ashur is to fall and their guilty will burn as though in a fire at the gates of Jerusalem.

Chapter Thirty-Two

Verses 1-8

A king (or government) should not be concerned with self-interest or “Divine Right of Kings”, but with establishing the rule of law for all citizens and the improvement of the moral and intellectual tone of every home and individual. Under a righteous king like Chizkiya, Jews are more likely to open their eyes and ears to God's word and flattery will disappear; only the deserving will be given power and prestige.

Verses 9-14

No matter how safe and secure a citizen might feel (as, for instance, the Jews of Yehuda might have felt themselves after witnessing their own salvation from Sancheriv's terrifying invasion), disaster is only a hairsbreadth away if he might diverge from the Torah's path.

Verses 15-20

A society run by the moral principles of justice and charity will, as a direct result, enjoy great prosperity and true and enduring peace.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Verses 1-4

The lawless, violent nations of the world will see their fortunes reversed and, themselves, become the victims of plunder. Their fear of God's great power will paralyze them.

Verses 5-9

After years of fear, degradation and suffering (verses 7-9), Israel will rebuild – but only through Torah study and the pure morality of God's teachings.

Verses 10-12

God promises to rise to defend His people and rebuild their land while turning the very power of His enemies against them (verse 11).

Verses 13-17

The difficult but highly profitable path of teshuva is described: we must divest ourselves of any semblance of dishonesty while seeking kindness and straightness.

Verses 18-24

Israel will need fear no longer from foreign powers and Jerusalem will remain a secure and permanent home to our people – God Himself will lead both our moral and social lives (i.e. as our government).

Chapter Thirty-Four

Verses 1-3

A warning to nations that the fury of God will bear fruit leaving death and destruction in its wake.

Verses 4-7

God will first “battle” each nation's heavenly representatives (Edom, and later Bavel, are singled

out from among them) before turning to their earthly counterparts.

Verses 8-17

The ensuing destruction of these nations will be so complete as to preclude their civilizations ever being rebuilt.

Chapter Thirty-Five

Verses 1-4

A glimpse of God's ultimate redemption of His people. We will blossom as never before, but we are instructed to participate by strengthening each other's loyalty to God's Torah.

Verses 5-10

The redemption will (according to Daas Sofrim) consist of revenge against our enemies, an end to illness and weakness, an age of plenty, ease and purity of access to God and enduring joy.

Note: the events of chapters 36 through 39 (excluding the second half of chapter 38) are also covered in the book of II Melachim 18-20. According to Rashi (40: 1) the entire story is repeated here to divide the Sefer Yeshaya into two halves, the second of which is primarily devoted to comforting prophecies.

Chapter Thirty-Six

Verses 1-20

Chapter thirty-six is the first sustained historical narrative in Yeshaya. Specifically, Sancheriv, king of Assyria, sent an apostate Jew, Ravshakai, to convince Chizkiya and the Jews of Yehuda to surrender and submit to eventual resettlement.

Verses 21-22

The Jews, loyal to Chizkiya's instructions, do not respond to Ravshakai's message.

Chapter Thirty-Seven

Verses 1-4

Chizkiya turns to God requesting that He interfere, remove the threat to the Jewish people and thereby confirm His uniqueness from amongst all the powerless gods trusted by other nations.

Verses 5-13

Sancheriv is forced (by God's interference in his international affairs) to temporarily withdraw from Jerusalem. But he sends a taunting and threatening message to Chizkiya promising to return and to exploit the Jews' vulnerability.

Verses 14-20

Chizkiya, again, turns to God in prayer, begging for the protection he knows only God can provide.

Verses 21-35

God, through Yeshaya, replies to Chizkiya promising His protection and warning Sancheriv of the unavoidable fate that awaits him and his nation.

Verses 36-38

The miraculous destruction of Sancheriv's entire army at the gates of Jerusalem and the subsequent collapse of his empire.

Chapter Thirty-Eight

Verses 1-8

Chizkiya, upon becoming deathly ill (see Brachos 10a for the cause of his illness), begs God for

his life and is given his request – along with a miraculous sign.

Verses 9-20

Chizkiya addresses a public letter to his nation in which he describes the fears and subsequent exultation brought about by his illness (and its remission).

Verses 21-22

The cure.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Verses 1-9

Chizkiya, upon recovering from his illness, is honored by a visit from the king of Bavel. Chizkiya proudly shows him all the treasures of his empire, including the Temple's Holy of Holies. God, through Yeshaya, sharply criticizes Chizkiya for sincerely but inappropriately drawing Bavel too close. Chizkiya's life is spared (due to his immediate realization of his error), but the nation's fate is sealed.

With chapter forty the second half of Sefer Yeshaya – dealing primarily with words of comfort – begins. Comfort can be found in the simple knowledge that we, at the right time, will experience a national redemption. But it is also comforting to know that God really does run the world and that all the threats and suffering have their limits and even intrinsic value. We are the objects of God's constant attention (both nationally and as individuals) and we are certainly not forgotten (Daas Sofrim to chapter 40).

Chapter Forty

Verses 1-5

The navi is to “introduce” the nation to their God (verse 1), heralding the glorious end of Israel's painful centuries-long journey through exile and suffering. Their “debt” of sin more than paid in full (Rashi verse 2), God will reveal Himself and personally bring His people back to their land. The path to teshuva will then be eased through removing emotional obstacles (Daas Sofrim).

Verses 6-14

The navi is to loudly and widely contrast the illusionary power of other nations with the real power of God. Who can even fathom God's power and greatness?

Verses 15-18

God toys with or simply abandons the nations who maintain their willful ignorance of His nature. No offerings could possibly be equal to their sins (Rashi verse 16 – Daas Sofrim reads it: “even the greatest spiritual accomplishments of human beings are negligible before God”).

Verses 19-25

The fragility of their idols and the clarity with which knowledge of God is always available stand as indications of the frailty of their very governments (Daas Sofrim). The failure of these nations to recognize God in this world is nearly incomprehensible.

Verses 26-31

Jews! See how all-powerful and all-knowing is your God! With these qualities He supports and succors the weak but deserving. No one can escape His judgment.

Chapter Forty-One

Verses 1-10

The life of Avraham (and especially his battle against the Four Kings) is used as both a pointed

lesson to the nations of the world of how God powerfully guides history and as a promise that God will support and protect modern Jews as much as He did their ancestors.

Verses 11-16

Though vulnerable and impoverished through the centuries, the Jewish people will yet witness a time when their enemies will be brought down and even humiliated before the power of God. Israel itself – weak though they might be – will often be the instrument of revenge.

Verses 17-20

In great need, the Jews will be able to expect God's support (either through the supply of water or through the provision of the knowledge of Torah to those “thirsty” for wisdom).

Verses 21-29

The navi challenges the idolaters of the nations to point to any successful prophecies they produced that could compare to the Torah's countless accurate predictions. The navi then predicts the rebuilding of the Temple at the hands of Koresh, king of Persia, centuries before it occurred (see beginning of ch. 45).

Chapter Forty-Two

Verses 1-5

God, through orchestrating a growing universal recognition of His Law, will both protect His vulnerable people and support them in their moments of doubt.

Verses 6-9

“I am God” Whose power and influence will never diminish and, thus, Whose message is capable of giving sight to the spiritually blind.

Verses 10-12

The nations should “sing” a song inspired by their growing recognition of God's greatness and power.

Verses 13-15

God will restrain His fury at the nations' behavior no longer.

Verses 16-21

God will guide the spiritually blind of His nation despite their foolish reliance on the “power” of their idols - despite the fact that even now many still fail to “see” (verse 20, Rashi). The depth of our experience with God's providence allows us to increase our faith and loyalty (verse 21).

Verses 22-25

Despite the many examples from our own national history of God's generosity (especially considering it was our own flaws which brought about our suffering – verse 24) and from the nations around us, we will, as a group, largely fail to absorb and grow.

Chapter Forty-Three

Verses 1-8

Despite the national failings mentioned at the <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1193138/d> of chapter forty-two, God here describes His intention to support and guide us through any difficult and dangerous journeys we may face. We are, after all, the people He has purposefully built into His nation (synonyms of “created” etc., in this chapter can actually be taken to mean “established” or “built” - Rashi). Even if we appear blind to His role in our history, we will still be returned to our land.

Verses 9-15

While the nations of the world had their prophets and oracles, none was able to reliably predict

the future and especially not in a way that would be useful for their people. The Jews, on the other hand, are expected by God to testify before the world that, from our very earliest days, we have been securely guided by God's true prophecy.

Verses 16-20

All the fabulous miracles of our history will pale in comparison to the great changes God will bring about with our final redemption (see Brachos 13a) – which will include (literally or figuratively) the reclamation of land for pleasant human habitat.

Verses 21-28

God promises to maintain His close and caring relationship with the Jews despite their negligence in serving Him throughout their history – notably in failing to take sufficient advantage of the institution of Temple offerings (compare to 1: 11)

Chapter Forty-Four

Verses 1-5

Whatever the present situation of the Jewish nation might be, at some point in the future, in defiance of an apparently hostile environment (verse 4), there is certain to be a spiritual revival and a massive and varied movement of teshuva (verse 5).

Verses 6-8

Jews should realize – and testify about – the unique power of God as He interferes with the workings of history.

Verses 9-20

God ridicules the origins and helplessness of idols and the internal contradictions faced by those who manufacture and rely on them.

Verses 21-28

Since He will eventually destroy all idols, foil their purpose and arrange the conditions for the Jewish national restoration (verses 28-9), see to it that you return completely to God soon.

Chapter Forty-Five

Verses 1-8

The navi describes God's control over history, foretelling the rise – more than two centuries later – of Koresh (Cyrus), king of Persia, who will destroy Bavel and rebuild Jerusalem and its temple. Besides the fact that Koresh himself was personally deserving of this honor, God's orchestration of political events will demonstrate His unique and unstoppable power in world affairs and His care for His people.

Verses 9-14

The navi, on God's behalf, criticizes those who would question His management of world affairs or who would claim Him absent and negligent. “I will shape events and send a man (Koresh) who will selflessly work for the Jewish people.” Eventually, nations will fully recognize God's hand.

Verses 15-19

While His presence might often seem distant, His role in our creation and sustenance is absolute and His influence has always insured that His promises are kept and Israel will survive (both physically and spiritually).

Verses 20-25

The nations are invited to contrast the power of their gods to God...and to throw away their idols and humble themselves before Him.

Chapter Forty-Six

Verses 1-8

The contrast between the impotent man-made gods of the nations and the perpetually supportive God of Israel is emphasized (to strengthen the faith of those Jews who might have begun, in light of pagan successes, to doubt – Daas Sofrim).

Verses 9-13

God's unblemished record of both accurate predictions and unwavering support for His people should lead even those Jews who have drifted from their faith back to an appropriate level.

Chapter Forty-Seven

Verses 1-8

Because they showed far greater cruelty towards Israel than necessary, Bavel (and the Kashdim – Chaldeans) face a catastrophic fall. Their power and sophistication will be replaced by poverty and degradation; their confidence in their future by sudden collapse.

Verses 9-13

Bavel's obsessive reliance on witchcraft and their other arts has blinded them to the terrible reversal they face.

Chapter Forty-Eight

Verses 1-7

God's miraculous support for His nation has not been the product of our worthiness (something of which, in fact, we have very little), but of the promises He made to our ancestors and of His desire that His greatness be widely known. So that His crucial role in history should not be minimized, prophets were allowed to predict many of God's subsequent interventions.

Verses 8-19

From the very dawn of our history, we have resisted God's rule. Nevertheless, for His greater glory, He has continued to guide us; even the difficult times and periods of poverty were actually designed to purify us and prepare us for our true task. And He will yet again interfere for us in the future (through Koresh, for instance – verses 14-15). Had we only observed His Torah, the very fabric of our experience would have been different (verses 18-19).

Verses 20-22

More than a century before they actually arrived in Bavel, the Jews were told that the time would come for them to prepare to leave – despite the comfort you might enjoy there and despite the perceived difficulties you might face in leaving.

Chapter Forty-Nine

Verses 1-6

Despite his being prepared by God for his task from even before birth, the navi describes his sense of helplessness at accomplishing his mission (to return the Jews to their Father). Nevertheless, (as a sign of His optimism?) God's expectations for Yeshaya's mission grow to include broadening his message to become a light to the nations.

Verses 7-21

The Jewish people will again be raised from their lowly standing among the nations and helped to return in comfort and joy to their land. The land itself is, so to speak, reassured of God's enduring love for her and her people and that she will never be forgotten; that she will one day

joyously welcome her children.

Verses 22-26

God will surely wrest power from hostile nations and return it to the Jewish people...thereby enhancing His public glory.

Chapter Fifty

Verses 1-3

The Jews, no matter how far they feel they've drifted from God, must never think that He has abandoned them. He only awaits their teshuva.

Verses 4-8

The navi describes how God prepared him for his task, allowing him to stand firmly before the most painful persecution and insults. With this help, he will overcome all opposition.

Verses 9-11

Those loyal to God, no matter how dark their situation, should trust in His support. Those who oppose Him will suffer.

Chapter Fifty-One

Verses 1-6

God, through the navi, reaches out to Jews still seeking justice and Godliness in their lives – and to loyal members of the broader nation: look to history (the example of Avraham and Sarah) for evidence of the fearless dedication to Torah and of God's powerful support for those who remain loyal.

Verses 7-13

To those Jews who are themselves examples of moral greatness: disregard weak national leadership and focus instead on God's historic and eternal ability and willingness to support morality. Be strong and fearless; your enemies are mortal and powerless before God.

Verses 14-23

Prepare for periods of trouble – made necessary by national and personal flaws. Prepare for leadership gaps (verse 18). Wake up and devote yourselves to serving God with intensity because anything less won't work (Daas Sofrim verse 17).

Chapter Fifty-Two

Verses 1-5

The Jews are told to awake and strengthen themselves – for only through greater attachment to Torah lifestyles and teshuva will the redemption arrive. Meanwhile, God's glory languishes in exile; suffering both with and because of us.

Verses 6-15

The navi describes the great joy and glory awaiting Israel upon their redemption. On their own terms the Jews will be able to leave their foreign homes and rise above the contamination of exile. The nations will finally recognize their true nature.

Chapter Fifty-Three

Verses 1-3

The nations of the world will, upon seeing the Jewish nation savoring their redemption, express astonishment at how incorrect their previous impressions had been.

Verses 4-6

The nations will acknowledge their guilt in causing great suffering to the Jewish people over the centuries of their existence.

Verses 7-12

The Jewish nation has historically suffered great persecution and has (often) remained silent in the face of it. Despite the guilt of the nations for their part in it, God carefully measured the suffering to goad and inspire His people - both as individuals and as a community - to rise to meet their potential.

Chapter Fifty-Four

Verses 1-5

Jerusalem (the Jewish nation) is to rejoice in her redemption and spread beyond her previously restrictive limits. Because God is their redeemer, the Jews should be confident in a complete and painless transition.

Verses 6-13

If God has had to rebuke and punish us from time to time, the periods of comfort and support have been far longer and far more intense. He has sworn never to abandon us and to fill our glorious historic climax with riches and spiritual success.

Verses 14-17

Revenge against Israel's enemies should be left to God. Righteousness should be the foundation upon which a Utopian Jewish nation is to be built.

Chapter Fifty-Five

Verses 1-7

Focus on Torah with a passion as of a man thirsty for water and it will pay considerable dividends. Eventually, it could even lead to a national rebirth on a scale similar to that of King David. But don't lose any opportunities: for God is not available with the same closeness in every time period.

Verses 8-11

Humbly seek God's Torah; ever mindful of our intellectual and spiritual weakness. His guidance will never fail to succeed.

Verses 12-13

We will leave exile amidst complete, undiluted joy and opportunity. Enemies and indeed everything that stands in the way of our growth will be replaced by people and resources better suited to achieving our goals.

Chapter Fifty-Six

Verses 1-2

With salvation just around the corner, Jews should especially focus on justice, righteousness and proper Shabbos observance – these “root mitzvos” being particularly useful at just such times.

Verses 3-8

The navi reaches out to converts and the childless – the people most vulnerable to the fear of being pushed from the mainstream of Judaism and to the depressing thought of, upon their death, disappearing without a trace. In truth, a substantial legacy is guaranteed for those who commit properly to mitzva observance.

Verses 9-12

Those without any intense desire for spiritual uplift are destined to “consume” each other but

feel no satisfaction. Their leaders, drunk and lazy, will be blind to the dangers about them and unable or unwilling to warn their people even of the threats they do see.

Chapter Fifty-Seven

Verses 1-2

The righteous are sometimes taken from this world prematurely so they needn't experience their generation's growing corruption.

Verses 3-13

With complete disregard for God's will and for the benefits of His Torah advice, the generation (perhaps that of Menashe – Daas Sofrim) blindly pursues pleasure and immerses itself in the occult and pagan practices. They thus forsake God's guaranteed protection.

Verses 14-19

Because God is patient and forgiving, the nation is advised to change direction, removing those elements of their lives that lead to sin. God's anger is never permanent: anyone can change and improve.

Verses 20-21

Those who refuse to improve will not share God's peace and healing.

Chapter Fifty-Eight

Verses 1-5

The navi is to expose his generation's distance from Torah - a distance hidden beneath largely superficial observance and misleadingly sophisticated halachic questions. They may frequently fast, but they remain blind to a fast's real purpose. Outward manifestations of piety, in and of themselves, are of little value.

Verses 6-12

By contrast, a fast should inspire one to reconsider his relationship with both God and man. Social justice and support for the poor should be strengthened. One's natural reaction to contact with individuals facing misfortune should be to reach out – both physically and emotionally. Then, when our lives are instinctively geared to such sensitivity, our prayers and fasts will be capable of arousing Divine compassion and our own impact on the world around us will be far more valuable.

Verses 13-15

Shabbos should inspire those who observe it to learn to subjugate their own needs before God's. Its message should be enhanced by consciously making it more enjoyable (the mitzva of oneg).

Chapter Fifty-Nine

Verses 1-4

Not because God isn't able to help are the nation's needs are not always met, but because the people's actions leave them undeserving.

Verses 5-11

In their blind search for security and pleasure, the Jews futilely pursue worthless and even dangerous adventures, all the while ignoring God – and forfeiting His assistance.

Verses 12-16

Yeshaya, including himself in the generation's guilt, acknowledges specific areas of sin, mostly revolving around honesty in the public sphere and in the court system.

Verses 17-21

Ultimately, despite our unworthiness, God will rise in His fearsome glory to both protect and redeem us.

Chapter Sixty

Verses 1-22

The time will come when the Jews will become a light and source of inspiration for the nations. Instead of persecution and hostile control, the world's nation's will donate their resources and abilities to the service of the Torah nation and the Temple. All that was lost over the many centuries of Jewish suffering will be replaced and even enhanced. The Jews themselves will thrive in this new order.

Chapter Sixty-One

Verses 1-4

Yeshaya's mission to announce that, at some future date, the degradation and suffering of the Jews will be replaced by the glory of God and the respect of the nations. The Jews' newfound international position will allow them to rebuild the “ruins” of civilization.

Verses 5-11

God will bring about an era in which the Jews find support and assistance from amongst the nations of the world and in which righteousness will rise to dominance.

Chapter Sixty-Two

Verses 1-7

The ancient defamations and perceived weakness of Israel in eyes of the world at large will be permanently and resoundingly refuted by God and Israel's reputation will be restored to its true glory.

Verses 8-9

God promises that (once the appropriate time arrives) no longer will anyone enjoy the fruits of Jewish labor and of their land besides the Jews themselves.

Verses 10-12

The public teshuva program and other key elements that must precede the full redemption.

Chapter Sixty-Three

Verses 1-6

God promises to “dirty Himself” in the process of eliminating once and for all the influence and ascendancy of Edom.

Verses 7-10

The navi charts the step-by-step decline in the relationship between God and Israel, from its height at the exodus from Egypt to the difficult times in which God acted as Israel's enemy (see Daas Sofrim).

Verses 11-14

The golden age of Moshe's leadership is recalled during which God was always (relatively) close and the nation was gently led as by a caring shepherd.

Verses 15-19

Having no other support (even that of our ancestors) and being subject to near-overwhelming social and historical impediments to full teshuva, the Jews are at the mercy of God Himself. They beg for Him to return to His previously active role in their history.

Chapter Sixty-Four

Verses 1-3

A plea for God to employ open miracles in destroying evil; leaving the world's nations in deep fear of His power and greatness.

Verses 4-6

Israel's spiritual weakness and corruption have led to great catastrophes – even including the death of many Torah leaders (see Rashi to verse 5).

Verses 7-11

Despite recognizing that His silence is just, the navi begs God on behalf of his orphaned and helpless nation to limit His anger and, conscious of the terrible devastation we've faced (and the concurrent chillul HaShem), restore our national good.

Chapter Sixty-Five

Verses 1-7

The navi records God's plans (offered as the answer to his request of the previous chapter), to finally abandon the First Temple (Daas Sofrim). He catalogs God's claims against disloyal Jews: their repeated failure to take advantage of the many magnificent opportunities to respond to His call for teshuva and their defiant search for spiritual fulfillment in the most unclean places. These rebels will surely not go unpunished.

Verses 8-10

God will carefully separate His loyal servants from the rebels, rewarding the righteous and destroying the others.

Verses 11-15

The navi contrasts the joy and blessing awaiting the righteous with the utter devastation destined for the rebels.

Verses 16-25

The righteous will enjoy a new age that is fundamentally different from all of previous history. A new world in which physical needs are all provided in an atmosphere of security and confidence. A world in which visible and guaranteed success will crown every worthy endeavor.

Chapter Sixty-Six

Verses 1-4

God needs neither a Temple nor the offerings of the insincere. Those who ignored their opportunity to hear and respond to God's guidance will be brought down.

Verses 5-17

The remaining righteous among the Jews will experience a painless rebirth in their land, enjoying God's special attention. They will witness His revenge against their enemies,

Verses 18-21

The sins of rebellious Jews will “force” God to inspire the nations to send worthy representatives to Jerusalem to witness appropriate punishment and reward and to return to their homes with their reports.

Verses 22-24

In this new world (see chapter sixty-five), all nations will regularly and humbly come to bow before God and to see the suffering remains of His enemies. According to the Mishna (Eduyos 2: 10) these verses are referring to the length of the punishment in Hell.