

TLATA DEPURANUTA & SHIVA DENECHEMTA

Three Haftarat of Punishment,
Seven Haftarat of Consolation

The capstone consolation: Sos Asis

Sos Asis follows *almost* directly on last week's haftara, Kumi Ori. That haftara was all of chapter 60, and this haftara begins with the 10th verse of chapter 61.

The haftara cuts across three chapters, and ends at 63:9.

The starting point of the haftara breaks the text in an unusual place. Chapter 61 only has 11 verses, and we start with the final two before proceeding to 62.

The haftara has no singular theme - a lot is going on

Consider Fishbane's delineation:

PART 1. CELEBRATION OF ZION (Isaiah 61:10–11)

Zion exults in the God of her salvation; for He has robed her in garments of victory; and she is adorned like a bridegroom with a turban, like a bride bedecked in finery.

PART 2. ANTICIPATION AND PROMISE (Isaiah 62:1–7)

a. Isaiah 62:1–3 The prophet now proclaims his enduring concern for the fate of Zion and says that he shall not keep silent (*lo' 'ehesheh* [v. 1]) on her behalf until her victory is complete and she is given a new name by God Himself.

b. Isaiah 62:4–5 The new names are announced: Zion shall be called “I delight in her” (*heftzi vah*) and “Espoused” (*be'ulah*) (v. 4), for the Lord shall rejoice over her and the land shall be espoused—just as “a youth espouses a maiden” and “a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.”

c. Isaiah 62:6–7 The prophet adds that he has set watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem who shall also not be silent (*lo' yeheshu*), but shall serve as continual “remembrancers” (*mazkirim*) of Zion and her plight before God (v. 6), “until He establish Jerusalem and make her renowned on earth” (v. 7).

Continued:

PART 3. OATH AND ADVENT (Isaiah 62:8–63:6)

a. Isaiah 62:8–12 The prophet dramatizes God's deliverance by citing two divine speeches. The first is an oath "by His right hand" that the enemies of Zion shall "nevermore" harvest the grain of the land for which the nation has labored; rather, they who have sown and reaped shall rejoice in the Temple before God (vv. 8–9). The second speech is God's word to the prophet to "announce to Fair Zion, your Deliverer is coming!" In this statement we learn of other names to be given to the people ("The Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD") and to the city ("Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken") (vv. 11–12).

b. Isaiah 63:1–6 Following the oath and proclamation, the prophet beholds a wondrous sight and asks: "Who is this coming . . . majestic in attire?" God answers that "It is I, who contend victoriously" (v. 1). And to the further question, "Why is Your clothing so red?" God answers that His clothing is stained with the blood of the peoples (vv. 2–3)—"trampled" in "anger" on a terrible rampage of "vengeance" (vv. 3–4, 6).

PART 4. PRAISE AND PROCLAMATION (Isaiah 63:7–9)

In counterpoint, the haftarah concludes with a note of thanksgiving for the "kind acts of the LORD" (v. 7). God has remained faithful to His own people and been their ever-present "Deliverer" (v. 8): troubled by their troubles, He redeemed them in love "and exalted them all the days of old" (V. 9).

10 I greatly rejoice in the LORD,
My whole being exults in my God.
For He has clothed me with garments of triumph,
Wrapped me in a robe of victory,
Like a bridegroom adorned with a turban,
Like a bride bedecked with her finery.
11 For as the earth brings forth her growth
And a garden makes the seed shoot up,
So the Lord God will make
Victory and renown shoot up
In the presence of all the nations.

62 For the sake of Zion I will not be silent,
For the sake of Jerusalem I will not be still,
Till her victory emerge resplendent
And her triumph like a flaming torch.
2 Nations shall see your victory,
And every king your majesty;
And you shall be called by a new name
Which the LORD Himself shall bestow.
3 You shall be a glorious crown
In the hand of the LORD,
And a royal diadem
In the palm of your God.
4 Nevermore shall you be called "Forsaken,"
Nor shall your land be called "Desolate";
But you shall be called "I delight in her,"
And your land "Espoused."
For the LORD takes delight in you,
And your land shall be espoused.
5 As a youth espouses a maiden,
"Your sons" shall espouse you;
And as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,
So will your God rejoice over you.

6 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have set watchmen,
Who shall never be silent
By day or by night.
O you, the LORD's remembrancers,^b
Take no rest
7 And give no rest to Him,
Until He establish Jerusalem
And make her renowned on earth.

62.2-6: The prophet addresses Jerusalem and informs her of the reversal of her sad plight. **6-7:** The postexilic setting is crucial for understanding these vv. The full redemption predicted for Zion has not yet arrived, even though some exiles have returned. *Therefore* the watchmen remind God that Jerusalem still awaits aid, for the city is not yet firmly established.

8 The LORD has sworn by His right hand,
By His mighty arm:
Nevermore will I give your new grain
To your enemies for food,
Nor shall foreigners drink the new wine
For which you have labored.
9 But those who harvest it shall eat it
And give praise to the LORD;
And those who gather it shall drink it
In My sacred courts.
10 Pass through, pass through the gates!

Clear the road for the people;
Build up, build up the highway,
Remove the rocks!
Raise an ensign over the peoples!
11 See, the LORD has proclaimed
To the end of the earth:
Announce to Fair Zion,
Your Deliverer is coming!
See, his reward is with Him,
His recompense before Him.^a
12 And they shall be called, "The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the LORD,"
And you shall be called, "Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken."

63 Who is this coming from Edom,
In crimsoned garments from Bozrah—
Who is this, majestic in attire,
bPressing forwardb in His great might?
“It is I, who contend victoriously,
Powerful to cgive triumph.”c

2 Why is your clothing so red,
Your garments like his who treads grapes?c
3 “I trod out a vintage alone;
cOf the peoplesc no man was with Me.
I trod them down in My anger,
Trampled them in My rage;
Their life-blood’ bespattered My garments,
And all My clothing was stained.
4 For I had planned a day of vengeance,
And My year of redemption arrived.
5 Then I looked, but there was none to help;
I stared, but there was none to aid—
So My own arm wrought the triumph,
And gMy own rageg was My aid.
6 I trampled peoples in My anger,
hI made them drunk withh My rage,
And I hurled their glory to the ground.”

63.1–6: The divine warrior. A short and disturbing passage concerning divine vengeance against God’s enemies, symbolized especially by the Edomites. This passage is closely connected with ch 34, which also belongs to the Deutero-Isaianic collection; there, too, the prophet predicted a great slaughter in the land of Edom. On the Edomites and the background of this ch, see 34.1–17 n. 1: God comes from the south, covered with the blood of enemies. A speaker (perhaps the prophet, perhaps the inhabitants or watchmen of Jerusalem) notices a figure approaching from the south and asks who it is; God replies in the second half of the v. *Edom* is the land southeast of Judah. *Botzrah* is a city in Edom. **2–6:** The speaker asks

5 For My sword shall be drunk b in the sky; Lo, it shall come down upon
6 Edom, Upon the people I have doomed, To wreak judgment. GOD has a
sword; it is sated with blood, It is gorged with fat— The blood of lambs and he-
goats, The kidney fat of rams. For GOD holds a sacrifice in Bozrah, A great
7 slaughter in the land of Edom. Wild oxen shall fall with them, c Young bulls
with mighty steers; And their land shall be drunk with blood, Their soil shall be
8 saturated with fat. For it is GOD’s day of retribution, The year of vindication for
9 Zion’s cause. Its d streams shall be turned to pitch And its soil to sulfur. Its land
10 shall become burning pitch, Night and day it shall never go out; Its smoke shall
rise for all time. Through the ages it shall lie in ruins; Through the aeons none

Word fun amongst the gore

3–5. The imagery of God trampling a vineyard and bespattered with blood (63:2–3) is connected with Edom and Bozrah (v. 1) through puns on the toponyms: *me-'edom* (from Edom) sounds like *me'udam* (reddened; cf. v. 2), and *mi-botzrah* (from Bozrah) sounds like *mi-botzer* (from picking grapes). A similar sense is suggested by the Septuagint. Compare also the imagery in Jeremiah's oracle against Edom (Jer. 49:9): "if vintagers [*botzrim*] were to come upon you."

Final section of the haftara, Childs's translation:

- 63:7 I will recount the gracious acts of the LORD,
the praises of the LORD,
according to all that the LORD has done for us,
the abundant goodness to the house of Israel
according to his mercy and many kindnesses.
- 8 He said, "Surely they are my people,
sons who will not act falsely,"
and so he became their savior.
- 9 In all their affliction, he was afflicted,^a
and the angel of his presence saved them.
In his love and pity he redeemed them.
He raised them up and carried them
all the days of old.

Fishbane manages to tie this all together into a coherent arc:

The haftarah develops through a succession of speeches that move from hopeful expectation to thanksgiving. At the beginning, either Zion (Targum Jonathan) or the nation personified (Ibn Ezra) speaks of rejoicing in the Lord, who has clothed her with garments of triumph. The tone

The future hope is intensified by subsequent revelations. The prophet delivers two divine speeches. The first enunciates God's oath promising Israel new bounty, when she shall reap what she sows and bring it to the Temple (Isa. 62:8–9). The second speech announces God's imminent advent and giving the people and Zion new names (62:11–12). This advent is then portrayed through a spectacular manifestation of God in His blood-spattered garments (63:2–6). This depiction of violent rage against Israel's enemies is juxtaposed to a prayer of thanksgiving for God's ongoing "mercy," "kindness," "love," and "pity" for His people (63:7–9). The polarities of divine destruction and care are starkly drawn: what is doom for the outsider is deliverance for Zion and Israel.

Continued:

The transition from Zion's hope to God's advent is marked by the motif of the garment. At the outset, the city exclaims that God “has clothed me with garments of triumph [*bigdei yesha*], wrapped me in a robe of victory [*me'il tzedakah*]” (Isa. 61:10). The significance of these garments is extended through their comparison with the turban of a bridegroom and the finery of a bride (61:10) and also the crown and diadem of royalty (62:3). This new reality is further expressed by the divine garments of victory—the “crimsoned garments [*hamutz begadim*]” of God, “majestic in attire [*hadur bi-bvusho*]” (63:1). The fate of Zion is thus figuratively correlated with acts of divine victory, thereby linking the two ends of the haftarah.

Concluded:

The haftarah is the seventh and concluding prophecy in the cycle of seven weeks of consolation after Tisha b'Av and its recitation of Lamentations (see the haftarah for Va-'ethannan). It has climactic force—emphasizing deliverance, comfort, and renewal for Zion and its inhabitants. Indeed, many specific passages and images revise or recall other haftarot in the cycle. For example, the call to “Clear the road [*panu derekh*] for the people; build up, build up the highway! . . . Raise an ensign over the peoples!” for the advent of God who comes with “His reward” (*sekharo*) and “recompense” (*u-fe'ullato*) (Isa. 62:10–11) echoes the proclamation in the first haftarah of consolation: “Clear in the desert [*panu derekh*] a road for the LORD! Level in the wilderness a highway for our God!” (40:3)—who has “His reward” (*sekharo*) and “recompense” (*u-fe'ullato*) with Him (40:10). In addition, the theme of transforming Fair Zion from one “forsaken” (*'azuva*) to one espoused by God (Isa. 62:4–5) develops the themes of abandonment and marriage found in the second and fifth haftarot of consolation (see Isa. 49:14, 18; 50:1 and 54:1, 6, respectively).¹⁶

Because of this emphasis, as well as the renaming of “abandoned” Zion as “Espoused,” and the baring of God’s “arm” of victory, the old laments over God’s abandonment and the withdrawal of His saving arm (Lam. 2:3; 5:20) are reversed. The city that was once called “Perfect in Beauty, Joy of All the Earth” (Lam. 2:15) shall soon be restored to splendor—“a glorious crown in the hand of the LORD” and blessed with new names of love and delight (Isa. 62:3–4).