

TLATA DEPURANUTA & SHIVA DENECHEMTA

Three Haftarat of Punishment,
Seven Haftarat of Consolation

WEEK THREE: SHABBAT CHAZON

First chapter of Isaiah, but only up to verse 27 in our practice.

This haftarah is read using the tune of Eichah (Lamentations).

Whenever we talk about Yeshayahu 1, we have to acknowledge that we don't know when it's chronologically set.

That's because many (both traditional and modern) commentators identify chapter 6 as an account of Isaiah's first prophetic vision:

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I beheld my Sovereign seated on a high and lofty throne” “Holy holy holy” etc.

Can we determine the context of Yeshayahu chapter 1?

Michael Fishbane,
*The JPS Bible
Commentary:
Haftarot*

“Not specified”

The haftarah is taken from the opening chapter of the Book of Isaiah, where the prophet accuses the people of infidelity to God, iniquity, and false reliance upon the Temple rituals. Divine doom is forecast. Judah and Jerusalem shall be laid waste, with few survivors. A vision of purgatory is also projected; after which Zion and her inhabitants shall be redeemed, and justice will be restored.

The prophet does not specify the circumstances for his reproof.¹ According to the superscription, Isaiah's prophetic career spanned the reigns of several Judean kings during the last half of the eighth century B.C.E. These were decisive times, when Assyrian and Aramean foes repeatedly threatened Zion and its leaders. In the end, Jerusalem was miraculously saved (in 701 B.C.E.), and Isaiah's prophecies of doom were not realized in his lifetime. When the city finally fell to the Babylonians a century later (in 586 B.C.E.), the prophet's elegy of woe (*'eikhab*, “Alas” [Isa. 1:21]) came to symbolize that destruction and anticipate the identical cry of mourning (*'eikhab*, “Alas!”) recited over the city at the beginning of the Book of Lamentations (Lam. 1:1). For that reason, later generations considered Isaiah's prophecy to be the appropriate reading for the Sabbath preceding the fast of Tisha b'Av, when that scroll of sorrows is chanted.

Here's that footnote

*Haftarah for Devarim (Shabbat
Hazon)*

1. Modern scholarship over the past century has debated the redactional makeup of this chapter. The literature is vast. Two recent studies have reviewed the material from different angles and indicated the different layers and periods proposed. See Susan

“The literature is vast” - very intimidating!

But the important thing is that NOW, these passages form an integrated introduction to the sefer

Brevard Childs,

*Isaiah: A
Commentary*

The chapter is made up of a series of smaller units that differ in meter, form, and historical background. Usually they are so divided: vv. 2–3; 4–9; 10–17; 18–20, 21–26; (27–31). The units do not stand in a chronological sequence. The description of Zion's physical desolation (vv. 7–8) now precedes the portrayal of Israel's opulent but empty cultic exercises (vv. 10–17) from an earlier period. Often a catchword connection is evident (cf. vv. 9 and 10).

Form-critically, different genres are represented, such as accusation (vv. 2–3), invective (vv. 4–9), torah instruction (vv. 10–17), trial summons (vv. 18–20), dirge and promise (vv. 21–26). Much energy has recently been expended in refining the analysis of the form and function of these various genres (cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*). There is some justification for this attention because the discrete units have left traces from their prehistory. However, the major point to be made is that these separate units have been given a new function within a literary context that is distinct from their original role. They now form an introduction to the book as a whole. The determination of its present function is exegetically far more important than recovering an earlier oral stage.

It is a fortunate characteristic of the recent interpretation of chapter 1 that the importance of determining the literary function of the passage within the larger corpus has been recognized and pursued with great energy. Fohrer's well-known

And while we can make educated guesses about the context(s), we really don't need to focus on that. We should focus on the chapter as it comes to us.

Regarding the question of the original historical setting of the subunits, the majority opinion assigns the material largely to the eighth century. In spite of the majority position, vv. 7–9 are thought most likely to reflect the period following Sennacherib's invasion in 701. Obviously the reference to Israel's excessive cultic activity (vv. 10–17) stems from an era prior to the later disaster.

Although the direction of recent research on chapter 1 has been often very illuminating, in my opinion much of it has not been fully on target. It has missed the dominantly theocentric function of the chapter. The focus is not on Isaiah, who remains solely a vehicle; nor does it fall primarily on Israel. Rather, the introduction focuses immediately and throughout the chapter on God. It recounts his overwhelming anger toward Israel, offers examples of the nation's rebellious behavior, and then turns to God's effort to bring his people into obedience. The chapter concludes with the exercise of God's will both to punish and to restore Zion according to his own purpose. The dirge over the city is ended through an eschatological reversal that restores the faithful city. Zion's redemption is not just a "possibility" (Fohrer) that is realized only by repentance, but a transformation derived solely from God, into which salvation Israel is invited to enter through true repentance.

Bear in mind that (depending on *shittah*) most likely a congregation would not read to the end of the chapter.

More from Fishbane

The haftarah is composed of three separate pronouncements of doom. Each presupposes the sin and iniquity of the nation and their divine consequences. The first of these speeches (Isa. 1:2–9) is the most bleak, charging the people with rebellion against God.⁴ No qualification mitigates the condemnation and negative characterization. They are called a “sinful nation,” a “people laden with iniquity,” a “brood of evildoers,” and “depraved children” (v. 4). Indeed, they are less mindful of their divine Lord than a dumb ox of its human master. Small wonder that a total punishment is envisioned. The nation will bear God’s wrath as a sore wound over their body, and their eyes shall behold the devastation of their lands and cities. Zion shall be left like a solitary booth. No

though in content they are quite dissimilar.⁵ For example, the second speech is not a doomsday pronouncement like the first one, but a divine “instruction” that admonishes the people’s misuse of the Temple and provides corrective counsel. God tells the people that He has no need of their sacrifices or incense or prayer—because He “cannot abide” their solemn assemblies while they are steeped in iniquity and will ignore the prayers uttered by those with crime on their hands. The nation is therefore advised to purge itself of evil and turn to acts of justice. Such behaviors will restore the people to God and earthly bounty, whereas rejection of them will result in doom. The prophet thus teaches that the people’s abuse of religion and its institutions may be corrected and that their punishment is not irrevocable (as in the first speech). In Isaiah’s words, the people’s fate hangs on their decision to follow God’s instruction of social justice. This is the core of divine concern.

The third speech (Isa. 1:21–27) continues the themes of the second one but is distinct in genre and theological emphasis. Like its predecessor, this pronouncement emphasizes the injustice that fills the city and the rampant disregard of both orphan and widow (1:23; cf. v. 17). But unlike the second speech, the final one is a lament bemoaning the destitution of Fair Zion and the doom that is yet to come.⁶ Divine punishment will wreak vengeance, measure for measure: as the people’s “silver has turned to dross” (1:22), cheapening the coin of exchange through deceit, so will God “smelt out your dross as with lye” (v. 25).

One last bit of overview

From the *Jewish Study Bible* (JPS translation with modern commentary)

(We'll look more at this work when we start talking about how the later chapters of Sefer Yeshayahu are different from the earlier chapters.)

1.2–31: A poem of indictment and hope. Some view this ch as a single speech that is especially comprehensive in subject matter and biting in tone. Alternatively, it may be a summary of the contents of the book as a whole, written specifically to be an introduction, probably to chs 1–33, but perhaps to the final form of the book (cf. 1.28–31 with 66.24). Much of this chapter (vv. 1–27) is read as the haftarah, or prophetic reading, on the Sabbath preceding Tish'ah be'av, which commemorates the destruction of the Temple. This section is thus seen as offering theological justification for that event.

In other words, not much is for certain about this chapter's composition.

What we do know is that this is the first taste the brand-new reader gets of Yeshayahu's "brand."

This passage, composite or not, is centered and front-loaded. It gets primacy over "Holy holy holy" and Yeshayahu's actual commission.

Yeshayahu 1:2-4

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for GOD has spoken:
“I reared children and brought them up, and they have rebelled against Me!

An ox knows its owner, a donkey its master's crib,
[yet] Israel does not know, my people takes no thought.”

Ah, sinful nation! People laden with iniquity!
Brood of evildoers! Depraved children!

They have forsaken GOD,
Spurned the Holy One of Israel,
Turned their backs.

Childs:

“The accusation is made, not in forensic terms as a breaking of God’s law, but in a parabolic form of wisdom. Israel has less understanding of its Lord than even the most stupid of domesticated animals.

Still, the two different idioms, law and wisdom, bear testimony to the same subject matter: Israel’s **total alienation** from its God to whom it owes its life and well-being.”

vv5-6

Why do you seek further beatings, that you continue to offend?
Every head is ailing, and every heart is sick.

From head to foot no spot is sound:
All bruises and welts and festering sores—

Not pressed out, not bound up, not softened with oil.

Childs again:

Often in prophetic speech an invective ushers in a harsh word of divine threat (e.g., Amos 6:4ff.), but the verses that follow describe a judgment already fallen. The imagery is of a rebellious slave who has been repeatedly beaten by his master. He is covered with bleeding wounds, bruises, and stripes, which have all begun to fester and sicken the entire body with infection. As yet no remedy for healing has been administered. The pus has not been wiped clean, the wounds have not been bandaged, no soothing oil has been applied. Then the imagery shifts abruptly to the land that lies desolate, with cities gutted by fire and ravished by foreign invaders. Jerusalem alone, “daughter of Zion,” remains utterly isolated and forlorn, like an abandoned child, isolated and useless. Often commentators draw attention to Sennacherib’s proud boast of shutting up Hezekiah “like a bird in a cage” (*ANET*, 288).

vv7-8

Fishbane:

Your land is a waste,
Your cities burnt down;
Before your eyes,
The yield of your soil
Is consumed by strangers—
A wasteland as overthrown by
strangers!

8. like a booth in a vineyard The prophet says that after the destruction Zion will be “like” a booth. According to Kimḥi, this means that God will abandon Israel as a watchman does his booth (at harvest’s end). Alternatively, the figure bespeaks the desolation of the nation itself.

Fair Zion is abandoned
Like a booth in a vineyard,
Like a hut in a cucumber field,
Like a city beleaguered.

v9

Had not GOD of Hosts

Left us some survivors,

We should be like
Sodom,

Another Gomorrah.

Childs:

Fishbane:

destruction (cf. Deut. 29:22; Amos 4:11). The perversity of the people of Sodom also serves as a negative model for the prophet in Isa. 1:10 (cf. Deut. 32:32). Reference in Isa. 1:7 to the land “as overthrown [*ke-mahpekhat*] by strangers [*zarim*]” alludes to this scenario (for the phrase *mahpekhat Sedom* [the destruction of Sodom], see Deut. 29:22). Alternatively, *mahpekhat zarim* is a scribal error for *mahpekhat Sedom*, under the influence of the word *zarim* at the beginning of the phrase.

Then again the prophetic message shifts and a brief glimmer of light enters into the grim picture when the prophet focuses once more on God. Zion would have been extinguished (a subjunctive mode is introduced) were it not for the plan of God. The prophet does not here develop an elaborate theology of the remnant, but only hints at a “few survivors” who have escaped the devastation. This remnant—the leftovers—prevents Zion from being utterly destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. However, to interpret this verse simply as a postexilic addition, ascribing to the survivors a hope for political restoration, badly misses the heart of the prophetic message. Rather, an alternative to Israel’s desolation is given in the form of confession. The remnant are the preserved of God and with them Isaiah personally identifies: “Y^heh had left us some survivors.” There is a new life from the old. Within chapter 1 this note is only briefly sounded, but the theme will be developed in great length in the succeeding chapters.

vv10-17

Hear the word of GOD, You chieftains of Sodom; Give ear to our God's instruction, You folk of Gomorrah! What need have I of all your sacrifices?, Says GOD.

I am sated with burnt offerings of rams, And suet of fatlings, And blood of bulls; And I have no delight In lambs and he-goats.

That you come to appear before Me—Who asked that of you, to come trample my courts?!

Bring no more empty gifts. [Your] incense is offensive to Me. New moon and sabbath, Proclaiming of solemnities, Assemblies with iniquity I cannot abide.

Your new moons and fixed seasons Fill Me with loathing; They are become a burden to Me, I cannot endure them.

And when you lift up your hands, I will turn My eyes away from you;

Though you pray at length, I will not listen. Your hands are stained with crime—

Wash yourselves clean; Put your evil doings Away from My sight.

Cease to do evil; Learn to do good.

Devote yourselves to justice; Aid the wronged.

Uphold the rights of the orphan; Defend the cause of the widow.

Comments

Childs:

Israel's offerings are deemed "empty," "abhorrent," and its sacred liturgy a "trampling" in God's courts. God's reaction is portrayed in graphic language. He is "fed up," weary and disgusted before this tedious ordeal, and is even filled with "revulsion" toward Israel's carefully orchestrated rituals. To suggest with

Fishbane:

16–17. The prophet provides a list of proper actions. This is the positive core of the prophetic "instruction" (*torah* [v. 10]). Purification and purgation of evil are combined with the emphasis on justice and righteousness.

Rabbinic midrash notes nine virtues in this list and links them to the nine days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; and as the tenth day is the day of purification and atonement, so here the tenth feature of the list is "Come, let us reach an understanding,"—says the LORD. "Be your sins like crimson, they can turn snow-white" (v. 18) (Yalkut Shimoni 2:389). Rashi refers to these ten topics as being ten warnings and exhortations to repentance. Both interpretations thus correlate Isaiah's list with the Ten Days of Repentance, beginning with Rosh Hashanah and climaxing on Yom Kippur.

Jewish Study Bible:

- 12 That you come to appear before Me—
Who asked that of you?
Trample My courts¹³ no more;
Bringing oblations is futile,^c
Incense is offensive to Me.
New moon and sabbath,
Proclaiming of solemnities,
^dAssemblies with iniquity,^d
I cannot abide.
- 14 Your new moons and fixed seasons
Fill Me with loathing;
They are become a burden to Me,
I cannot endure them.
- 15 And when you lift up your hands,

a-a Emendation yields "like Sodom overthrown." b Lit. "Daughter."
c-c Others "To trample My courts? / ¹³Bring no more vain oblations." 
d-d Septuagint "Fast and assembly"; cf. Joel 1:14.

later period, objected to this idea (see, e.g., Jer. 7:1–20). Later biblical and Jewish writers respond in various ways to the failure of Isaiah's prophecies regarding Jerusalem's eternal status. **10–20: Rite and right.** The sacrifices and prayers offered by Isaiah's contemporaries are useless because they are not accompanied by ethical action. This is a frequent prophetic theme; see esp. Amos 5:21–25; Isa. 58:1–9. **10–15:** God's attitude toward ritual. According to the translation of vv. 12–13 above, God rejects sacrifice altogether; but according to the alternative in the translators' note, God rejects only the vain rituals of unethical people. Both renderings are linguistically defensible; rabbinic commentators prefer the latter (cf. Prov. 21:27). **10: Sodom . . . Gomorrah:** Isaiah

vv18-20

Come, let us reach an understanding, says GOD.
Be your sins like crimson, they can turn snow-white;
Be they red as dyed wool, they can become like fleece.”

Childs:

If, then, you agree and give heed,
You will eat the good things of the earth;

But if you refuse and disobey,
You will be devoured [by] the sword.—
For GOD has spoken.

[18–20] The unit is clearly separated from what precedes and follows. The language is forensic: “let us test each other,” “let us come to a legal understanding,” “let us debate our case together.” The divine offer is conciliatory, but not at this juncture forgiving (cf. Boecker for the structure of a trial). The two subsequent clauses in v. 18 are to be rendered as conditional rather than construed as interrogative or ironical statements, which are less suited to the juridical context. Even though Israel’s sins are grievous—crimson red—they can still be rendered free of blemish and pure. There is yet a chance, but placed before Israel is a clear-cut decision, one determined not by intention, but action. If obedient to the way of life prescribed by God, Israel can enjoy the gifts of the land. But if the people remain rebellious, the alternative is destruction by the sword. The purpose of God for his people has always been for salvation. Israel’s future is not determined by some blind force of fate, but stands before the consequences of its own decision.

vv21-26

Alas, she has become as a harlot,
The faithful city that was filled with justice,
Where righteousness dwelt—
But now murderers.

Your silver has turned to junk metal; your wine is diluted with water.
Your rulers are rogues and cronies of thieves,
Every one eager for presents and greedy for gifts.
They do not judge the case of the orphan, and the widow's cause never reaches them.

Assuredly, this is the declaration of the Sovereign, GOD of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel:
Ah, I will get satisfaction from My foes; I will wreak vengeance on My enemies!
I will turn My hand against you, And smelt out your impurities as with lye, And remove all your slag!

I will restore your magistrates as of old, and your counselors as of yore.
After that you shall be called City of Righteousness, Faithful City.”

That which has been made impure can be purified...

Childs:

[21–26] There is general agreement that vv. 21–26 comprise a unit. The form is initially that of a dirge (cf. Isa. 14:4ff.; Ezek. 28:12ff.) which functions as an invective, and which is followed by a threat to God's enemies, concluding with a promise to Zion. The faithful city and dwelling place of righteousness, Zion, is now characterized as a harlot. The imagery shifts to silver becoming slag, and wine adulterated with water. The city has lost its purity. Then in v. 23 the figures are dropped in place of a literal portrayal of Zion's sorry condition. Both ruler and people are corrupt, engaged in bribery and theft. No one defends the rights of the abused orphan and widow.

Fishbane:

21–26. This unit opens with the reproof that Zion has turned from a “faithful city” where “righteousness dwelt” (v. 21) into a place of injustice and iniquity (vv. 21–23), and it closes with the promise of Zion’s restoration into a “faithful city” of “righteousness” (v. 26) —after a divine purification. The divine prophecy “I will restore your magistrates as of old, and your counselors as of yore” (v. 26) is reformulated as a request for the renewal of justice (“Restore our magistrates as of old,” etc.) in the daily *Amidah* prayer (Benediction II). Rabbenu Hananel (on B. Megillah 17b) refers to this prayer as *birkat mishpat*, “The Benediction of Justice.”

Two readings of v27 (where most conclude)

Fishbane:

Jewish Study Bible:

- 27^b Zion shall be saved in the judgment;
Her repentant ones, in the retribution.^c
28 But rebels and sinners shall all be crushed,
And those who forsake the LORD shall perish.

^b Others "Zion shall be saved by justice, / Her repentant ones by righteousness."

^c For this meaning cf. 5:16; 10:22. ^d Heb. "they."

5:16

וַיִּגְבֶּה ה' צָבָא-וֹת בַּמִּשְׁפָּט
וְהָאֱלֹהִים הַקָּדוֹשׁ נִקְדָּשׁ בַּצְדָּקָה:

GOD of Hosts is exalted by judgment;
The Holy God proved holy by retribution.

10:22

כִּי אִם-יְהִי עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּחֹל הַיָּם
אֲשֶׁר יָשׁוּב בּוֹ כְּלִיּוֹן חֲרוּץ שׁוֹטֵף
צְדָקָה:

22 Even if your people, O Israel,
Should be as the sands of the sea,
Only a remnant of it shall return.
Destruction is decreed;
Retribution comes like a flood!

27. *Zion shall be saved in the judgment* In this translation, the concluding verse of the haftarah complements the hopes of the preceding section by stating that the city will be saved during the purification just described; the final phrase ("[and] her repentant ones [*ve-shaveha*], in the retribution [*bi-tzedakah*]") adds the human action necessary for salvation. This view interprets the verb *ve-shaveha* as deriving from *shuv* (repent) (Rashi; Ibn Ezra) and presumes that the noun *tzedakah* alludes to the above-mentioned purification (cf. 5:16, 10:22). But this is not certain. Other commentators understand *ve-shaveha* as referring to those who "return" to Zion (Kimhi) and interpret *tzedakah* in its regular sense of "righteousness" (the parallel word *mishpat* in the opening clause is similarly rendered as "justice," not "judgment"). This yields a quite different sense: "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return of her with righteousness" (OJPS). The alternative translations thus yield different theologies and emphases. The second version adds the necessary human precondition of justice, and this seems to fit best with the overall chapter.¹²

Verses 28-31 (not common practice to include)

But rebels and sinners shall all be crushed,
And those who forsake GOD shall perish.

Truly, you shall be shamed because of the terebinths you desired,
And you shall be confounded because of the gardens you coveted.
For you shall be like a terebinth wilted of leaf,
And like a garden that has no water.

Stored wealth shall become as tow [dry flax tinder],
And he who amassed it a spark.

And the two shall burn together, with none to quench.

Content of 28-31

Jewish Study Bible,
reminiscent of Childs'
comments on 18-20:

1.28-31: The fiery punishment.

Are the sinners whose end is described contrasted with the reformed Zion described in the preceding vv., which will be spared their fate? Or are residents of the sinful city as a whole the subject of these vv.? The prophet leaves the answer unclear, perhaps intentionally; it will be given by the inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves; through their behavior, they will lead God to decide whom to punish.

Stopping before the end of the chapter

Why don't we read the end of the chapter?

We want to end with verse 27.

Is that the best ending?

Let's look at [variant practices](#).

Some Temanim read the whole chapter.

Others, following Rambam (and Meiri, and Sefer Eshkol),
Also finish the chapter, but read ONLY vv21-31 - but
that's because that tradition read Isaiah 1:1-20 last week!

There is also a tradition, possibly related to that but
possibly not, that THIS week we only read vv1-20.

וריאציות של המנהג הנפוץ

• מנהג חלק מהתימנים היום⁴ – ההפטרה מסתיימת בישיעהו א':ל"א

• מנהג חלק מהתימנים שאמנם היום⁵ – ההפטרה מסתיימת בישיעהו א':כ'

Rambam et al, other variants

- Rambam we just mentioned
- מנהג חלק מהתימנים היום, ⁶ פירוש המשנה לרמב"ם מגילה ג'ו', ⁷ רמב"ם הלכות תפילה וברכת כהנים י"ג:י"ט, מאירי, ⁸ ספר האשכול⁹ – איכה היתה לזונה (ישעיהו א':כ"א-ל"א).
 - מנהג ארץ ישראל הקדמון לשבת איכה¹⁰ – ההפטרה מתחילה בישעיהו א':כ"א ומסתיימת בישעיהו א':כ"ז
 - חומש אשכנזי-צרפתי בכתב יד¹¹ – מסיימים ב(ישעיהו ב':ג').
 - קטע גניזה¹² – ההפטרה מסתיימת בישעיהו ב':ה'

Older E"Y minhag reads only vv21-27.

A handwritten Western European chumash records a tradition that continues into chapter 2, up to verse 3. A Cairo Genizah fragment records a tradition that goes all the way until 2:5!

What's in those verses?

1. The word that Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2. In the days to come, the Mount of GOD's House
Shall stand firm above the mountains and tower above the hills;
And all the nations shall gaze on it with joy.

3. And the many peoples shall go and say:
"Come, let us go up to the Mount of GOD, to the House of the God of Jacob;
That we may be instructed in God's ways, and that we may walk in God's paths."
For instruction shall come forth from Zion, and the word of GOD from Jerusalem.

4. Thus [God] will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples,
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks:
Nation shall not take up sword against nation;
They shall never again know war.

5. O House of Jacob!
Come, let us walk
By the light of GOD.

What a difference a few verses make! Talk about finding hope sprouting amongst the ashes!

So: some minhagim read up to these less bleak verses. And some minhagim end with the very bleak verses at the end of ch1. But the common minhag ends with v27, which is sort of handy, because it can be read in either way!