

# Haftorat Parshat Chukat

## Haftorat Rosh Chodesh

### Yeshayahu 66:1-24

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

*When Shabbat falls on Rosh Chodesh, a special haftarah is recited instead of the one usually related to that week's parashah. This haftarah is all about redemption, making me think about the specialness of Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh – I believe it is a sign of the forthcoming geula!*

#### **The Connection Between the Haftarah and Shabbat Rosh Chodesh**

I believe that this *haftarah* was chosen for Shabbat *Rosh Chodesh* because it connects Shabbat with *Rosh Chodesh* and describes the renewal of redemption, which the New Moon heralds. "It shall come to pass on every New Moon after New Moon, and Shabbat after Shabbat, that all people shall come to bow down to Me, said Hashem" (*Yeshayahu* 66:23). By comparing *Rosh Chodesh* to Shabbat, the prophet gives it great significance. Since the newborn moon of *Rosh Chodesh* gives us hope for redemption, the entire *haftarah* describes the forthcoming redemption. At that time the holiday of *Rosh Chodesh* will become renewed to receive the status of a full-fledged holiday on par with Pesach, Sukkot and Shavuot (*Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* 44).

#### **Women and Rosh Chodesh Celebration – A Sign that the Geulah is Forthcoming**

*Rosh Chodesh* has always endowed us with a fresh start and an opportunity for introspection regarding what we went through during the past month, and the new opportunities and challenges facing us in the upcoming month. The *Tur*, (*Orach Chaim* 417) explains that the three pilgrim festivals correspond to Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'acov, whereas, *Rosh Chodesh* corresponded to the twelve tribes. When the tribes sinned by making the Golden Calf, *Rosh Chodesh* was taken away from them and given to their wives. Therefore, each *Rosh Chodesh* uniquely reveals the qualities of one of Israel's tribes. During exile, however, the light of *Rosh Chodesh* is withheld to a certain degree. Yet, we are already experiencing the beginning of the era of Mashiach when *Rosh Chodesh* is returning to its intended capacity. This parallels the unfolding of the feminine light in the world. In the last generation, women, especially have begun celebrating and tuning into the message of *Rosh Chodesh*. This is a prelude to the days of Mashiach, when the entire Jewish people

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will experience the Divine Feminine Indwelling Presence at the *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple) every *Rosh Chodesh*. When our hearts will be purified from the *yetzer hara* (negative impulse), *Rosh Chodesh* will become an uplifting experience filled with opportunity for spiritual elevation. (*P'sikta Rabbati 1:3*). Already now, we increasingly celebrate each month's particular quality and energy, through our exuberant *Rosh Chodesh* festivities.

### ***Birth, Renewal, and Redemption***

The forthcoming redemption described in our *haftorah*, in fact employs the metaphor of labor and birth: "Before she labored, she was delivered. Before her pangs came, she bore a son. Whoever heard of such a thing?...Can a land pass through labor in a single day? Or shall a nation be born all at once? ...Shall I, who bring about labor, not bring about birth? ...Shall I, who cause birth, shut the womb?" (*Yeshayahu 66:7-10*). According to *Metzudat David*, "Before she was in labor she gave birth" refers to Tzion, because when all of her children will gather inside of her, it is considered as if she gave birth to them, without labor or contractions. Radak explains this metaphor to refer to the sudden redemption which will come upon Israel. Yerushalayim is compared to the mother, and the Jewish people, her children. Before all the children of Israel have gathered completely, the redemption will come unexpectedly to Israel, just like a woman giving birth prior to having contractions. Since the difficulties of pregnancy and childbirth were the consequence of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, at the time of redemption, when the Tree of Knowledge becomes transformed into the Tree of Life, labor pangs are lessened and the process of birth will be less painful.

### ***The Divine Mother will Comfort her Children from the Suffering of Exile.***

In our time, we are already experiencing the beginning of this change. I know many women who gave birth before they reached the birthing clinic. This almost happened to myself. I just made it, and gave birth both times, less than twenty minutes after I had arrived. Our *haftorah* is overflowing with lush promise and hope, maternal love, and divine protection. "I will extend peace to her like a stream...Then you shall suckle, and be carried upon her sides and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you and you shall be comforted in Yerushalayim" (*Yeshayahu 66:12-12*). Radak reveals that the metaphor of a woman is employed because women put more effort into things than men. Just as a mother comforts her children from any difficult experiences they may have gone through, so will the Divine Mother comfort her children, Israel, from the suffering of exile. The prophet relates the place of comfort to Jerusalem, for in this place Hashem will reveal His glory to us. *Metzudat David* expands this concept and explains that we will be comforted in Yerushalayim, because specifically in Jerusalem will Israel receive much goodness, as a comfort for all the suffering we endured. During redemption, Hashem will give birth to a renewed reality. Spiritually, the world becomes reborn, with a heightened consciousness and capacity for prophecy. This is reflected in *Rosh Chodesh*, when, on a small scale, we renew our awareness of Hashem. Rabbi Shimshon Refael Hirsch explains, that each time the moon finds the sun again, receiving its rays of light afresh; Hashem wants His people to find Him again, and to be illuminated with His fresh rays of Light. By seeing the renewal of the moon, we access our potential for personal renewal. The more we allow this renewal to enter our lives, the closer we get to the ultimate renewal and the final redemption, as described in our *haftorah*.



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### ***The Month of Tamuz Rectifying the Sense of Seeing by Looking with G-d Colored Glasses***

Vision is the sense of the month of Tamuz, and its tribe is Reuven, which means “see a son.” At his birth, Leah named him Reuven because she said, “Surely Hashem **has looked** upon my affliction” (*Bereishit* 29:32). The crystal of the tribe of Reuven is the ruby, related to the word Reuben. Due to its brilliant red color, this stone is called *odem* (from the language of *adom*/red) in Hebrew, and is the most sensually visible of all the stones. The midrash teaches us that the Jewish people were tempted to make the golden calf on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz as a replacement for Moshe, because Satan showed them a vision of Moshe floating dead between heaven and earth (*Shemot Rabah* 41:7). Perhaps television today can be compared to the vision of the Satan who made the Jewish people lose hope. The screen shows a vision, which is seemingly objective. However, often it is a product of a certain agenda, to destroy the Jewish people and our mission in the world. It may show a vision of Jews murdered and tortured, making Israel lose hope and scared to live here. It often portrays a false image of the Jews as perpetrators reacting excessively aggressive. This is destructive for the Divine Image of Israel, and can alienate people spiritually from her. During this month we have to really work on purifying our vision, and seeing beyond the mask of external physical reality, by connecting with the Divine light behind the mask. What you see is not what you get. You can visit Israel and just see a lot of old rocks. You can walk on the Judean hills, and see nothing but trees and houses. If you look with G-d-colored glasses, you may see beyond the surface to get a sense of David Hamelech who walked these very hills with his flock as he composed the lyrics and tunes of the *Tehillim*.

## About Us



### **Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum**

*Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.*

*For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.*



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*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, **Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion.***

*Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters, she lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, in Israel.*

*If you are interested in:*

*Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact [info@berotbatayin.org](mailto:info@berotbatayin.org) or in **Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha**, please contact her at [director@berotbatayin.org](mailto:director@berotbatayin.org) or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>*

### **Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin – Holistic Torah Study for Women on the Land of Israel**

At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

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### **Support Our School!**

You have the unique opportunity to help us continue to build and amplify the light of Torah on the Land of Israel. With your help we can increase our ability to provide women an extraordinary Torah environment where they can build a solid Jewish foundation which will have an impact for generations to come.



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