

Haftorat Noach / Rosh Chodesh

Yesha'yahu 66:1-24

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

The Connection Between the Haftorah and Shabbat Rosh Chodesh

I believe that this *haftorah* 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 *haftorah* 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 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

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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*.

The Month of Cheshvan: Rectifying the Sense of Smell

המליך אות נ' ברייה וקשר לו כתר וצרפן זה בזה וצר בהם עקרב בעולם, וחשון בשנה, ודקין בנפש זכר ונקיבה.
(ספר יצירה פרק ה משנה ט)

"He made the letter *nun* king over Scent and He tied a crown to it and He combined one with another and with them He formed Scorpio in the Universe, *Cheshvan* in the Year, and the small intestine in the Soul, male and female" (*Sefer Yetzirah* 5:9).

A Vessel to hold the Lights

The month of *Cheshvan* serves as the vessel to hold all the lights of the many holidays we just celebrated during the month of *Tishrei*. This is why *Cheshvan* does not even have one minor



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holiday. During the month of *Tishrei*, we taste of the great Divine lights. In *Cheshvan*, even though the taste is gone, the fragrance still remains, just as the fragrance of our *etrog* remains long after Sukkoth. The month of *Cheshvan* serves as a channel that allows all the spiritual heights of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkoth, and *Simchat Torah* to permeate the entire year. This is similar to the ritual of *havdalah*, where we partake of pleasant smelling spices/herbs in order to allow the lights of Shabbat to infuse the coming week with its lingering fragrance.

The Sense of Smell

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg explains that the word for the organ of the month: the intestines (*dakin*), derives from the word “minute” (*dakah*) or “particle” (*dak*). It implies the power to dissect into fine, refined parts. This is the process used to prepare the incense for the Temple. All of the sacrifices in the Temple service are meant to produce a satisfying aroma (*rei'ach nichoach*) and please the Divine sense of smell, which implies the Divine satisfaction with the service of His children. We read about the first expression of this Divine satisfaction during the month of *Cheshvan*, when Noach offered his sacrifice to G-d on the 28th of *Cheshvan*. It is the fats of the intestines that when offered on the altar produces the satisfying aroma for G-d. For this reason the intestines are connected with the sense of smell.

The Letter Nun

The letter of the month is *nun*. The first letter *nun* appears tall and barren, save for its thick root. The final *nun* appears completely barren, but for a root that grows deep under the surface, much like a scorpion whose tail is longer than its body. Following a rich harvesting of the fruits of our spiritual efforts, during the month of *Cheshvan* our focus turns inward toward our roots. In the same manner, the tree, relieved of the burden of its heavy fruit, delights in the return of the healing rain that follows the long dry summer season. In *Tishrei* we planted the seeds, and in *Cheshvan*, we wait for the rain to water the seeds. The holidays of *Tishrei* are the seeds of the entire year, and during *Cheshvan* we need to bring these seeds into fruition with our Torah learning. The first rain in *Cheshvan* is called *yore*, from the same root as the word Torah, as it is likened to our teachings that come from above. May Hashem shower us with both physical and spiritual rain – both *yore* and Torah, and may we be worthy to receive!

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



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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, Israel.

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