

Weekly Haftorah

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Shout for Joy, O Daughter of Zion...

Haftorat Beha'alotcha

Zechariah 2:14-4:7

This week's haftorah from the last of the twelve Minor Prophets, Zechariah, is one of my favorites. It is so beautifully poetic and overflowing with hope, in its description of Hashem's returning Israel with the Shechina to our Holy Land.

The Connection between the *Haftorah* and the Torah Reading

The vision of the golden *Menorah* (Candelabra) in this week's *haftorah* links the *haftorah* to *Parashat Beha'alotcha*, which opens with instructing Aharon to kindle the *Menorah* daily. Nechama Leibowitz explains that the lighting of the *Menorah* symbolizes the purpose of the entire service in the *Mishkan* – the elevation of the soul towards the Divine light by keeping the mitzvot of the Torah. The light emanating from the golden seven-branched *Menorah* represent the spiritual light of the *Shechina*, the Divine Indwelling Presence of G-d. Moshe was unable to picture or comprehend the design of the *Menorah*, until Hashem showed him in a vision. In the *haftarah*, Zechariah is likewise shown a vision of a “Golden *Menorah* with a bowl upon the top of it, and seven lamps to it, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, attached to its head. Two olive trees by the *Menorah*, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other by the left” (*Zechariah* 4:2-3). It seems to me that the vessel for spiritual light must be shown through a Divine vision, since it cannot be comprehended through human logic. It is evidently by Divine Providence that the secular State of Israel has chosen as its emblem, the image of the *Menorah* as described in this week's *haftorah*. This emblem clearly symbolizes how Israel is a vessel for the Indwelling Presence of the *Shechina*. The red thread that ties this week's *parashah* to its *haftorah* is that they both describe the dwelling of the *Shechina* within Israel. In the *parashah*, the description of kindling the *Menorah* is followed by the purification of the Levites for the service in the *Mishkan*, and the cloud of Hashem's *Shechina*, which covered the *Mishkan*. Even the story about Miriam and Aharon's critique of Moshe, teaches us about how Moshe had to always be ready for the *Shechina*, which dwelled perpetually upon him. The *haftorah* describes not only the reconstruction of the Second Temple, but moreover, it alludes to the final *geulah* when Hashem's *Shechina* will return permanently to Israel. The *Mashiach* will be able to build the Temple and cause the *Shechina* to dwell within it as effortlessly as lighting the *Menorah*, “...not by physical might or power, but by my spirit, says Hashem of Hosts” (*Zechariah* 4:6).

Messianic Prophecy

The *haftorah* opens in high spirits describing the exuberant happiness that we will experience when the *Shechina* returns to *Yerushalayim*: “Shout for joy, O daughter of *Tzion*, for, behold! I will come and dwell in your midst, says Hashem” (*Zechariah* 2:14). The Prophet announces the forthcoming greatest joy, when Hashem will return to dwell openly within the Jewish People after the longest period of concealment. Though the *haftorah* definitely refers to the historical period in which Zechariah lived, towards the end of the Babylonian Exile, the underlying message addresses the Diaspora two and a half Millennia later, prophesying the rebuilding of the Third Temple, by the *Mashiach*. Rabbi Yechezkiel, the Noda b’Yehuda explains that the verse, “And many nations will attach themselves to Hashem...” (*Zechariah* 2:15), clearly refers to the time of *Mashiach*, for only in the Future to Come will the nations leave their idols and return to Hashem. This principle is reflected in our prayer on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, “For My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations!” (*Yeshu’ya* 56:7). In addition, Hashem promises in the *haftorah* “...I will dwell in your midst” (*Ibid.* 14), yet the dwelling of Hashem’s *Shechina* was one of the five things missing in the Second Temple (*Babylonian Talmud, Yoma* 21b). Therefore, the optimistic prophecy in our *haftorah* primarily refers to the final redemption.

Daughter of *Tzion* – Under the Shelter of Hashem’s *Shechina*

Who is the “Daughter of *Tzion*” mentioned in the *haftorah*? According to Rabbi Nachman of Breslau, *Bat Tzion* is the root of the *Neshama* of Israel, which is the essence of happiness. We need to protect this holy *Neshama* from the impure shells of sorrow and moaning with extra holiness (*Likutei Halachot, Hilchot Peria v’Revia v’ishut* 3). It seems that in our generation sadness, depression, fear and worry easily creep in to our psyche and debilitate us. It takes great soul work to transform and eradicate these negative emotions from our consciousness. The first step is to recognize them, as we often block away feeling anything at all out of fear. By strengthening our *bitachon* (trust in Hashem) and realizing that EVERYTHING is for the good, with Hashem’s help we have the ability to overcome negativity and reach a constant level of happiness. B’er Mayim Chaim explains that there is the protecting wall of *Bat Tzion* (See *Eicha* 2:8), which surrounds Israel like a wall, and seals us to be under the shelter of the wings of the *Shechina* (*Parshat Shoftim* 17). In my practice of spiritual healing I often use a guided imagery, visualizing this protective wall of Hashem’s light surrounding us, to develop immunization to disapproval and criticism from others.

The Return of the *Shechina* to *Tzion* for the Sake of *Bat Tzion* – The Congregation of Israel

The Noda b’Yehuda reveals that *Tzion* always refers to the dwelling place of the *Shechina* as *Tzion* means the innermost point. *Bat Tzion* refers to the congregation of Israel, because the *Shechina* dwells not only in a particular place but specifically for the sake of the Jewish people. Also in the time of exile, wherever Israel was exiled, the *Shechina* was exiled with us

(*Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 29a*). In the future with the ingathering of the exiles the *Shechina* will return with us. This is the intention of the prophet, “Shout for Joy O *Bat Zion*,” specifically “*Bat*” and not just “*Tzion*,” because the main *Simcha* is for the sake of *Bat Zion* (Israel) when Hashem “will dwell in our midst.” After learning this, I was still wondering why Israel is particularly called a “daughter.” In Lurianic Kabbalah the lowest *sephira* of *Malchut* (Kingdom) is the archetype of “daughter.” *Malchut* is the pure channel and manifestation of the upper *sephirot*. It is Israel’s task to manifest Hashem’s light into the world. Fulfilling this task is only possible when the unified *Malchut* returns to Israel, when we b”H will crown *Mashiach* as our righteous king. The Jewish soul is moreover a “daughter” of Hashem as it emanates from His holiness. Just like we related to Hashem as a loving father, Hashem calls us “daughter of *Tzion*” when his *Shechina* returns to dwell within us in the Land of Israel. The *Noda b’Yehuda* continues to explain that since it is not an honor for Hashem to be outside of His holy Temple, therefore, Hashem’s *Shechina* is concealed during the exile. Sometimes it is manifested through judgment and the suffering of exile. However the judgment is always joined with (*rachamim*) mercy, for the purpose of the exile of the *Shechina* is to cover us secretly with the wings of the *Shechina* “For I am *Adoshem Elokeichem* (your G-d)” (*Shemot* 29:46) Even in the time of judgment (*Elokim*) I am still Hashem of Kindness. This concept is reflected in the end of the first verse of our *haftorah*.

For the Sake of the Joy of the Daughter of *Tzion* – The Jewish Woman

During our exile, although the *Shechina* is exiled with us, it does not dwell within our midst. However during the redemption, “Behold I come, and I will dwell within your midst, and many nations shall join themselves to Hashem in that day, and shall be My people, and I will dwell in your midst” (*Zechariah* 2:14-15). I feel very fortunate to witness the beginning of this process, as Hashem’s *Shechina* returns to Israel. In the serene mountains of *Bat Ayin*, its echo can be sensed through the rush of the wind in the trees, the reflections of the colors of the sunset, the sweetness of the fruits grown on the Land, and the enlightened star-filled sky. While dancing with the *Kalah* (bride) at weddings in *Yerushalayim* and its outskirts, the glow of the *Shechina* reverberates and fills the air. Through the singing and rejoicing of the “daughter of *Tzion*” – the Jewish women, we will bring about Hashem’s response “For here I come, and I will dwell in your midst, Says Hashem!”