

## On the Verge of Redemption

### *Haftorat Shemot*

*Yesha'yahu 27:6- 28: 13, 29:22-23*

*This Haftorah is about the ups and downs of the Jewish people on the verge of redemption. Sometimes when we feel most disconnected, we find solace in the voice of Hashem within us calling us back. In my experience, no matter what, we women retain our inner fire of desire for holiness which eventually will bear fruits!*

### From the Roots of Ya'acov to the Blossoms of Israel

This *haftorah* vacillates between harsh rebuke and the hope of redemption. It opens up on a promising note: "Those who are coming will strike roots as Ya'acov and will blossom and bud as Yisrael" (*Yesha'yahu 27:6*). When the Jewish people began settling the Land of Israel, we were a weak survivor of anti-Semitism. Like Ya'acov, which means heel, all we that was left of us was our roots under the ground. Yet, during the process of redemption, we unfold the potential of Ya'acov to become strengthened like Yisrael – (ישראל - לי ראש) – I have a head) developing ourselves and the Holy Land to bud and blossom. However, it is not enough to remove Israel from the exile, we, furthermore, need to remove the exile from Israel. We are still in the process of removing what remains of the Western culture: worship of the material and the body of youth. Like the touristy image of the sunbathed beauty at Tel Aviv's beaches, "...the Asherim and sun images shall not remain standing" (*ibid 9*). The images of immodest women pasted on billboards and bus-stops will not remain in the Messianic Jerusalem.

### The Connection between the Haftorah and the Torah Reading

This week's *haftorah* parallels the week's Torah reading on many levels. In *Parashat Shemot* the people of Israel are enslaved and suffering under the hands of the Egyptians, until Moshe leads them into spiritual freedom. Similarly, in the *haftorah*, the people in the Kingdom of Israel suffered greatly, because of their own lack of faith in G-d, and the corruption and greed of their leaders. Still, Yeshaya'ahu brings us a message of hope and redemption: "Hashem shall beat out His harvest from the strongly flowing river as far as the brook of Egypt and you shall be gathered one by one, O children of Israel" (*Ibid. 12*). These words remind us of the message of Redemption that G d spoke to Moses at the burning bush: "I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good and large land, unto a land flowing with milk and honey (*Shemot 3:8*).

### The Sound of the Shofar

"It shall come to pass on that day that a great *shofar* shall be sounded, and those lost in the land of Assyria and those dispersed in the land of Egypt shall come and they shall prostrate themselves before Hashem in the holy mount in Jerusalem" (*Yesha'yahu 27:13*).

According to the Ramchal, in his commentary on the Prophets, the great Shofar is *binah* (the Kabbalistic aspect of the feminine Divine Understanding) which will arouse the mercy of the

archetypal mother and father to gather the lost and dispersed. According to strict judgment, they would not be worthy to enter into holiness, except through mercy aroused from this Great Shofar. What is the difference between the lost and the dispersed? Those who were lost were completely subjugated to the other side (the negative) whereas, those who are dispersed are not dominated by the other side to the same extent. Perhaps the dispersed are the *Ba'alei Teshuva* (Returnees to Judaism) that return to the Torah of Jerusalem, and the lost ones are those originally Jewish souls, who due to centuries of assimilation, such as through the Spanish Inquisition, now return to the Jewish fold through conversion. I believe that this Great Shofar has already begun to bring forth its metaphysical magnetic sound, awakening the Jewish souls from the four corners of the earth to return home. Both the dispersed and the lost will “come to prostrate themselves before Hashem in the holy mount,” which according to Ramchal is the *nukba* – feminine – where these no longer lost souls come to subjugate themselves to holiness and engender their complete *tikun* – rectification.

### The Life-giving Power of *Tzedakah* (Charity)

“When its branches dry out, they shall be broken off; women shall come and ignite it...” (*Yesha'yahu 27:12*). This verse is quoted by the Talmud, to teach us not to receive charity from gentiles. “Ifra Hormiz, the mother of King Shapur sent four hundred dinarim to R. Ami, but he would not accept them. She then sent them to Raba, and he accepted them, in order not to offend the Government. When R. Ami heard, he was indignant and said: Does he not hold by the verse, When the branches are withered they shall be broken off, the women shall come and set them on fire?” (*Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 10b*) The reason why Rabbi Ami did not want to accept charity from the gentile mother of King Shapur was in order not to give them merit which would allow their kingdom to continue longer, but rather to have their kingdom dry out and be broken off, to give Israel respite. This teaches us about the power of *tzedakah*. If the charity of King Shapur’s mother would keep the wicked Persian Kingdom from withering away, how much more so does giving *tzedakah* by a Jewish person empower him or her to merit life, fruitfulness and personal redemption.

### Women Reignite the Withered Branch of Israel

On this verse about the dry branches which the women come to ignite, I will venture to share my personal commentary. We, Jews, go through ups and downs in our connection with Hashem. Sometimes we feel like a dried out branch and sometimes almost like one broken off and completely disconnected from Hashem Who is our root. This, then, is the time to ignite our inner fire and return to our source. Women from both Israel and USA have turned to me for spiritual healing in order to reconnect with their soul and feel Hashem’s closeness in their lives. I tell them, that although you feel disconnected, and broken, the fact that you reach out to return to your spiritual path is already the beginning of your rectification. You need to feel good about yourself that even though you are down and low and don’t even feel like praying, your desire to want to feel like praying is still burning within you. We, women have the ability to reignite our inner passion for holiness through our desire to be connected. The embers of this desire will grow into the flames of our innate love of Hashem, which will melt away the frost of our complacent, tired, indifferent, dormant spirit. We, women will awaken ourselves and each-other “to sanctify the holy one of Ya’acov, and revere the G-d of Israel (*Yesha'yahu 29:23*).