

הפטרה ליום כיפור שחרית

HAFTORAH FOR YOM KIPPUR MORNING

*This Haftorah is taken from Sefer Yeshayohu,
from verse 14 of Chapter 57 till verse 14 of Chapter 58.*

1. This Haftorah is not related at all to the Torah reading of the day but rather to the day itself. In this selection, the Novvi Yeshayohu exhorts the people to do Teshuvah, to repent from their evil ways and return (the word “Teshuvah” means “repentance” or “returning”) to HaShem and to the righteous life that He has commanded us in His Torah.
2. The Novvi describes how HaShem, however high and great, acknowledges the unhappiness of those that have failed to live their lives according to HaShem’s wishes and who then wish to return to Him. HaShem gives the sincerely repentant person every encouragement, He clears away every obstacle from the path of those willing to return — but the Teshuvah must be genuine. Mere lip-service, without genuine resolve to really better one’s conduct, is dishonest, says HaShem.
3. Fasting and praying is worse than useless if it is not accompanied with genuine kindness and consideration to those that have been wronged, says the Novvi in the name of HaShem. Fasting is supposed to bring one to Teshuvah; it is not Teshuvah in itself! Rather, “share your bread with the hungry, bring the harassed fugitive into your home, clothe the naked — and do not forsake your own poor relations!” says HaShem. Showy fasting and praying and public exhibitions of piety which are inconsistent with one’s treatment of others are abhorrent to HaShem.
4. Being considerate of others, helping the less fortunate in deed and in word, that is pleasing to HaShem. Fight injustice and oppression, stop exploitation of the weak and fight their cause — *that* is the kind of Teshuvah that HaShem wants!
5. Much of our backsliding comes about from our being too concerned with the physical and material. This distracts us from the real purpose of life which is to utilize the material and the physical in the service of HaShem. But HaShem has given us, here in this physical and material world, each week, a taster, as it were, of the spiritual world: the Shabbos. If we would cherish the Shabbos, says the Novvi, if we would treasure this spiritual experience as a day of enjoyment and would honour it and respect it as HaShem’s Day of Delight, this attitude and sense of proper priorities would enhance our mundane existence, too, and we would be worthy of HaShem’s blessings in everything we do, for so has HaShem promised. This is the closing message of this Haftorah to us when we stand before HaShem on Yom Kippur. On this day, when physical pleasure is severely restricted to us precisely so that we should better focus on the spiritual, together with Teshuvah for the past we should resolve to live our lives in such a way that we transform the purely material and physical into something holy and spiritual.