

SPEECH ON HAFTARAH OF PARSHAS EKEV

Today's haftarah is from the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah lived 2700 years ago,

at a time when the Jewish nation was split into 2 countries:

the country of Shomron in the north

and the country of Judah in the south.

Judah was a weak country, located between the competing superpowers of Egypt and Syria;

Each superpower was trying to defend itself and its allies,

while trying to conquer the **other** superpower and **its** allies.

So the government of Judah naturally wanted to ally itself with the strongest superpower, which it thought was Egypt.

But Isaiah advised the Jewish government to avoid aligning with **any** superpower.

Isaiah recommended, instead, that the Jews stay neutral and leave their fate in Gd's hands.

Isaiah correctly predicted that Egypt, which appeared to be the stronger superpower, would actually be defeated.

Isaiah predicted that Judah's capital, Jerusalem, would soon be destroyed by Babylonia and be abandoned and desolate for many years,

But Isaiah also predicted something that, at the time, seemed more incredible, that Jerusalem would eventually be rebuilt.

In this haftarah, Isaiah speaks, poetically and metaphorically,

as though the city of Jerusalem were already destroyed and desolate

and despaired of ever being inhabited again,

as though it were the city that Gd had forgotten.

In this haftarah, Isaiah metaphorically comforts Jerusalem by stating:

SPEECH ON HAFTARAH OF PARSHAS EKEV

Gd is even LESS likely to forget you than even a mother would forget her own child.
and that Gd says to Jerusalem,
you Jerusalem, even while standing desolate for so many years, are on my mind always.
One day you, Jerusalem, (as incredible as it now sounds in your current desolate condition)
will one day look around to see your children, who you thought went extinct long ago,
are returning home to you.

Their presence you will adorn you like pearls adorn a bride.
In contrast to your being abandoned,
your inhabitants will be so numerous that they will be squeezed for space.
You, Jerusalem, will say to yourself in amazement,
who bore me all these; I thought I was childless;
Foreign rulers will return your children to you and revere you.
Gd will defend you and feed your oppressors their own medicine.

Isaiah states that Gd says:
My apparent abandonment of you all these years is due to **your** abandoning **me**.
When I called out to you, I received no answer.

Isaiah concludes by explaining why he is preaching all this to the Jewish population.
Isaiah states: My oratory ability
to educate the population and give hope to the disheartened, is from Gd.
When Gd appoints me for this job to preach, I cannot turn my back on Him.
But I **do** turn my back to those who attack me for the message I am delivering.