

Provider. Surely, the Holy One of Israel is our great and comforting God, who not only keeps His eye upon the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 11:12), but to each and every one of His children.

The Holy One of Israel is our God and there is none other!

Haftarah Re'eih “Tangible and Intangible Weapons”

Isaiah 54:11-55:5

The third Haftarah in the series of seven consolations comes as *Re'eih* (Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17) is being studied. Once again Moses continued to contrast the consequences of blessings and curses, with specific instructions about pronouncements to be made, upon entering the Promised Land on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim.³ Additionally, after commanding the Israelites to destroy the worship places of the idolatrous Canaanites they were dispossessing, the Lord indicated that there will be a designated place where He will be honored and worshipped.⁴

Significantly, *Re'eih* also declared that the Lord was actually going to allow false prophets and dreamers of dreams, to perform false signs and wonders in order to test the hearts of the Israelites:

“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you” (Deuteronomy 13:1-5ff).

The Lord’s concern for the fidelity of His people, then and now, is very intense—to the point of testing their hearts—by the covert means of a clever voice, or an alluring word that may be accompanied by some kind of signs and wonders. By possibly allowing a subversive attack on His chosen people, God is able to determine who is truly with Him and who is succumbing to the wiles of the interlopers. Of

³ Deuteronomy 11:26-32.

⁴ Deuteronomy 12:1-32.

course, this exercise in testing those who call upon the Lord was not just for the ancient generation which originally received this word, but has continued down to the present era. Lamentably, it is the intangible weapons of deception and falsehood—which are not necessarily seen—that do far more spiritual damage than tangible weapons of physical warfare!

When this third week of consolation for God's people turns to this relatively short passage in Isaiah, the pivotal statement that "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper" (Isaiah 54:17) catches your attention. This is especially true because this reference is so often quoted by many of those who surreptitiously speak falsehoods to their unsuspecting targets. Nevertheless, in spite of this, Israel will ultimately be comforted in what sounds not too dissimilar from the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:19):

"O afflicted one, storm-tossed, *and* not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies, and your gates of crystal, and your entire wall of precious stones" (Isaiah 54:11-12).

This may be speaking of the eternal state, although it is also possible that the elements referred to are only listed because of their strength and durability, so it may be a promise of the Millennial Kingdom instead. The Prophet Isaiah referred to a time when Israel will be restored and instructed by the Lord:

"All your sons will be taught of the LORD; and the well-being of your sons will be great. In righteousness you will be established; you will be far from oppression, for you will not fear; and from terror, for it will not come near you. If anyone fiercely assails *you* it will not be from Me. Whoever assails you will fall because of you" (Isaiah 54:13-14).

Note how the Lord is responsible for turning up the crucible of heat for affliction, without letting the suffering go beyond the place where His work of refinement is accomplished. The Holy One maintains His role as the Defender and Protector of His people, and they will ultimately prevail because of Him:

"Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and brings out a weapon for its work; and I have created the destroyer to ruin. **No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their vindication is from Me,**' declares the LORD" (Isaiah 54:15-17).

The comforting promise of an everlasting covenant with the Almighty soothes every heart, especially when paralleled with the mercy bestowed upon King David:

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an

everlasting covenant with you, *according to* the faithful mercies shown to David” (Isaiah 55:1-3).

There is further affirming comfort, knowing that eventually, even unknown nations will ultimately come to Israel recognizing its unique position with the Creator:

“Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you, because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you” (Isaiah 55:4-5).

As we contemplate these comforting words of Isaiah this week, we need to always be reminded that there are usurpers wielding verbal weapons in the midst of God’s people today, just as they were present in Ancient Israel. They will not prosper, but they can do some serious damage as they are used to test the hearts and minds of who will be loyal to Him.

Let us be a people who do not fail the tests of the Great Comforter!

Haftarah Shoftim “Rear Guard Comforter”

Isaiah 51:12-52:12 (or finish at 53:12)

Our Torah reading for this week, *Shoftim* (Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9), deals initially with the selection of judges and officials to rule over the people of Israel, as they prepared to enter into the Promised Land.⁵ Selecting individuals with proper qualifications, not subject to bribes, intimidation, or prejudiced in their judgment, is critical for proper governance.⁶ *Shoftim* also mentions the requirements for Israel’s future kings.⁷ Additionally, the reference to a future prophet like Moses—which causes us to think immediately about Messiah Yeshua—of whom the Lord will hold everyone accountable, cannot be overlooked:

“I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require *it* of him” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

These criteria for governance are all powerful descriptions of how order is to be maintained among God’s people. And yet, as students of the Torah digest these descriptions about contemporary and future leadership, our Haftarah selection is

⁵ Deuteronomy 16:18-20.

⁶ Deuteronomy 17:6-13.

⁷ Deuteronomy 17:14-20.