

Tell a story
Haftarah Re'ay
by Julie Zhuk on 2022-08-27

Comments

This will go into depth about G-d gracing the Jews with a new layout of the city of Jerusalem. G-d will rebuild Jerusalem using precious gems. All the Jews will grow to know the Torah. This is found in two verses in Yeshayahu 54:11-17 and 55:1-5. The Jews will regain spiritual wealth, and Jews will learn the importance of giving charity. These verses will remind Jews that it is G-d who is in charge of war and peace. There will be a call for all Jews to study Torah. All of the nations will subordinate themselves to Mashiach. This Parsha will cover the third of the seven Haftaros of Consolation. This Parsha will deal with the theme of a future Redemption. The Haftara has themes that are mentioned in this Parsha.

The Parsha starts with the Jews being warned to obey the mitzvos G-d has asked of them to follow. By doing this, they will receive his many blessings. If they don't follow through with what G-d is asking of them, G-d will send curses their way. The prophet Yeshayahu strongly encourages the Jews to listen to the words of the Torah, this way their souls may have a chance to live. The Parsha assures the Jews that if they observe the Torah, they will be materially blessed. They will not need any paupers around them (Devarim 15:4). The Haftara goes into depth on this point, by describing that the future wealth of the Jewish people will come in the time of the Mashiach.

The Parsha has instructions for the Jews to give charity with an open hand (Devarim 15:8). The Haftara mentions this mitzva and names it one of the requirements for the Redemption. There is a verse in the Midrash that refers to Jerusalem as a poor woman. That poor woman has a stormy heart and all the nations state how she will never be comforted because of the many conflicts she has to go through. In response to this, G-d says for her to know in the future he will underlay her stones with Nofach gems. Not only that, but G-d will lay Jerusalem's foundation with sapphire stones. G-d said He was going to make the window panes from Kadkod gems, the gates of Jerusalem from Edkach gems, and the entire territory of Jerusalem was going to be made from precious stones.

G-d was making a lot of promises for the city of Jerusalem. This was all for the future and all of this talk about it being rebuilt is merely a metaphor. The Midrash suggests that Jews take the words of Yeshayahu literally. The Gemara has an answer about this and Rabbi Yochanan has some words to enlighten us about it. Rabbi Yochanan taught that, that in the future G-d was going to supply gems measuring ten by twenty amos (this meant twenty by forty feet) and set them into the gates of Jerusalem. One of his students didn't believe this could happen and that student made fun of Rabbi Yochanan. The student said, that there was no such gem in existence and one could only find a gem the size of a bird's egg.

If they did find a gem that was the size of a bird's egg, it was very rare. Soon after that student said those words, he went on a trip traveling by ship. G-d heard him say those words in a mocking way to the Rabbi Yochanan. That was why G-d decided to have that student punished,

that ship the student was on sank into the depths of the ocean. The young man saw a wondrous sight, there were angels who cut down gems and pearls to the size of ten by twenty amos. Those precious stones had already been prepared in the sea since the Six Days of Creation.

The student asked who these beautiful gems were for, and he was told that in the future G-d planned to set them into the gates of Jerusalem. That student miraculously survived the trip and instantly found the Rabbi Yochanan and apologized to him. He told Rabbi Yochanan, that every word he said was true and that he said he saw it with his own eyes these gems being cut to size. Rabbi Yochanan turned to him and said, before you saw it for yourself, you didn't believe what the Sages taught. So you are a mocker, a non-believer. Rabbi Yochanan was very upset and his voice was heard loud and clear. It made the midas hadin to strike the young man. That young man may have come around and believed after witnessing what the Sages originally taught, but he made fun of Rabbi Yochanan and was punished himself.

After being struck down, that student turned into a lifeless heap of bones. A lot of statements from our Sages and verses in the Torah have been ridiculed throughout the ages. As time has passed and new scientific discoveries have laid bare the limitations in our understanding of the universe, opinions have calmed down. Many cases have actually turned into respect for the teachings of our faith. Words like "impossible or fantasy" have become obsolete as we witnessed yesterday's science fiction turning into today's reality. A Jewish person can utilize scientific and technological advancements to reinforce his faith and belief in the Sages' teachings, for they are Divinely inspired. There is another story similar to the one about that student who didn't believe the promise G-d made for using gems to rebuild Jerusalem in the future.

There was a pious man who was walking along the coast of the city Haifa. He was deep in thought and kept asking himself if it could really be true, that in the future G-d would use two huge gemstones as windows for the Eastern Gate of the Bais Hamikdash? When he started doubting that G-d could do this, he heard a Heavenly voice say the words: if not for the fact that you are perfectly righteous, the midas hadin would have already punished you! The man was told that G-d created the universe in six days. That same Heavenly voice asked the man if he didn't think G-d could fashion the Eastern Gate of the Bais Hamikdash in the way that He sees it to be? Right away that same pious man started begging G-d for forgiveness.

He said the words to please spare him and explained the thought only merely came through his mind. He didn't actually say anything. G-d heard the man and miraculously allowed him to view a wondrous sight. That sight happened in the middle of the ocean, there were angels that were smoothing and polishing huge gems. The pious man was told these gems were going to be used for the windows of the Bais Hamikdash. One of those precious stones mentioned in the verse was called Kadkod. The Midrash asks us what this Kadkod means.

The Sages argued with each other about what this word means. Rabbi Yehuda taught that the word was a "shoham stone". That translated to as an onyx. A different Rabbi named Chizkiya taught people that kadkod was a "yashfeh" and that translated to jasper gem. The angels in heaven weren't sure amongst each other which stone G-d had promised to use in the future.

The angels, Gavriel and Michael argued about it on high. Finally, G-d said that He would accept both explanations the Rabbis had taught. G-d said He was going to use both kinds of gems.

Another famous Rabbi Yehoshua ben Laivi once asked the prophet Eliyahu to please show him the precious gem Kadkod. That Rabbi was a tzaddik and he wanted to see what G-d promised the Jews for their future. That request was fulfilled by Eliyahu. Eliyahu Hanavi performed a miracle, at the time there was a certain ship that was traveling on the high seas. On board was a Jewish child who secretly owned that gem Kadkod. The Midrash doesn't tell us who that child was. While on this boat, a storm broke out and the ship was in danger of sinking. Eliyahu appeared to the child and offered for them to do as he said and the ship would be saved in the merit of the child.

The child asked what needed to be done, Eliyahu reminded the child they owned the gem Kadkod. Eliyahu wanted to show the gem to the Rabbi Yehoshua ben Laivi. That child was a boy, he said that he was only a child. The child compared themselves to that Rabi Yehoshua. Eliyahu told the child to not worry and to make sure no one else saw that gem. We are taught in the Midrash that only special tzaddikim are supposed to see that kind of a gem. That child was told to take Rabbi Yehoshua ben Laivi to a dark cave, that was six thousand amos outside of Lud. It would be there that the child was to show the gem to that Rabbi.

The child agreed to do all of this and he found Rabbi Yehoshua ben Laivi. He told the Rabbi he had a secret to share with him. The child said they had to go somewhere far from where they were around all the people. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Laivi didn't ask any questions and followed the child. They got to the cave and the child said that he had the gem that the Rabbi wanted to see. The boy uncovered the precious stone. That precious stone gave a strong light that the entire cave was brilliantly illuminated. The light reached until the city of Lud and afterward the child threw the gem to the ground and it became covered up again.

The Midrash gives us some questions to ponder about these stones. Why do people need to be wealthy in the future? Would it not be sufficient if G-d was to promise that everyone would reach a great height of spirituality? Lastly, what is the point of rebuilding Jerusalem with precious stones? The Midrash gives us answers to these questions. The Midrash starts answering the third question first, these gems would make Jerusalem so beautiful that it would become world famous for its magnificence and splendor. It would cause every nation to appreciate the teachings of the Torah.

The next answer is about the wealth of the Jews. The Jews' future wealth would do away with the need to worry about earning a living, that way they could devote their lives to learning the Torah. The Midrash explains how this wealth would contribute to peace. In the present time, there could be two people having an argument about money matters. This goes before a judge for settlement and the judge says his verdict which usually leaves at least one of the people not satisfied. In the future, if two Jews are having a disagreement, one Jew can suggest to another that they should go to King Mashiach.

King Mashiach would be known for figuring out who is right. This King Mashiach would be in Jerusalem. When the two Jews would get to Jerusalem, they would find the city filled with many beautiful stones. They would pick up as many of these stones as they wanted. If the Mashiach would decide that one of them owes the other one money. The second person could say that this trip coming to Jerusalem has already made them so rich, that they don't need any more money. In the past, the Jews were known to serve idols even in Jerusalem.

Mockers could have been tempted to claim that Jerusalem got a status of an "ir hanidachas" - a Jewish city in which idol worship was prevalent. That was one reason Jerusalem needed to be destroyed and to never be rebuilt. When the Jews learned that G-d could get rid of Jerusalem completely to get rid of every trace of idol worship and it would change the city's landscape and beatify it with the precious gems, the people were silenced. It was one way for the Jews to see just how much G-d loved this special place known as, Jerusalem. The Midrash covers the topic of spiritual wealth for the Jews. G-d made a promise of material fortune, it was a prelude to the wealth of Torah. The Jews would enjoy the wealth of Torah.

There is a verse in the Midrash that says, And all your sons will be learned in the Torah of G-d. With everyone studying the Torah, there will be a lot of peace. G-d tells the Jews that if they toil in the Torah in the World, He Himself would teach it to them in the future world. He told the Jews that they would become His students, just as it says in the book of Yehsayahu 54:13. He says the sons of the Jews will become the students of G-d. All the Jews will be taught by G-d Himself. The Jews will never forget what they learn, for them it will result in having a "great sense of peace".

It means they will no longer make mistakes or have disputes due to forgotten traditions. Jews in the present time now may ask, why we find it so hard to learn Torah today? Why should we bother if G-d is going to teach it to us in the future anyway? The answer for that is, yes G-d promised to give Torah knowledge to all of the Jews. At the same time, everyone's level of comprehension is different. We learn from the Midrash that the more a person pushes themselves in Torah learning, the higher the level of instruction they will get from the Spirit of G-d. That is why, in the end everyone's effort helps pay the way.

The Midrash says the words, "your sons peace will be great" underscores a basic principle. This is explained with a story, there was a Rabbi Elazar who taught in the name of Rabbi Chanina. He said, those who study Torah will increase peace in the world. It says this in the book of Yeshayahu 54:13. When the quote mentions all the sons, it's relating to how we are children of G-d. By studying the Torah, the sons will be learned in the wisdom that G-d provides. That is another reason why there will be peace. One may wonder how those who study Torah can bring peace?

In Parsha Bechukosai, it says we are promised peace if the Jewish people study the Torah and fulfill the Torah. Then G-d will give peace to the land. In the quote referring to your sons that was mentioned earlier, it was relating to those who are builders of the land. Sons and builders are related because the children are the future building blocks of the Jewish people. We, the parents, are responsible for developing them into Torah-true Jews who will continue to build up the nation according to the tradition that's been handed down to us from Mount Sinai.

A famous Jew named, Chofetz Chaim, once said that every Jew is “a builder” and needs to be conscious of their role. The way to do this is remembering every human needs a roof over their head. That person will pay if need be, a high price for the roof. Every soul needs “an apartment” when it returns to heaven. Those apartments will not be built from stone or brick, but it all comes from the Torah and mitzvos that the person gathered in their lifetime. Our Sages teach, that whoever acquires Torah will acquire a home in the world to come. The Midrash asks how much effort one needs into building, renovating, and furnishing one’s home in this world? This is only for a temporary time period, it is really important for us humans to concentrate on building a proper home for oneself in the world to come.

In the world to come, is where the person will dwell eternally. The prophet, Yeshayahu, had painted for the Jews a colorful picture of the future financial and spiritual wealth of our nation. The Jews would need to do something to deserve all of this. This is where tzedaka comes into the picture for Jews, all that tzedaka one does, will help distance themselves from those wanting to oppress them. If Jews are giving tzedaka, they shouldn’t fear those oppressing them. The word for charity in Hebrew has two connotations to it. Righteousness, it relates to the performance of good deeds. Tzedaka, is also giving to those who need it. Rambam wrote that people need to be very careful when helping those in need. This refers to Jews giving tzedaka to the poor.

This characteristic is a sign that we are descendants of our forefather Avraham. G-d once said that Avraham would command his sons and his household after him to give tzedaka and do justice. That is found in Beraishis 18:19. The mitzva of tzedaka is fundamental to our religion. Jews will be redeemed in the merit of giving tzedaka, as the prophet Yeshayahu said, because of the tzedaka you give, you will be established. If people give tzedaka it’s only acceptable if the money has been earned honestly. Everything mentioned here relates to people being honest when we are handling business. Otherwise, not only is our tzedaka not evoking Heavenly mercy, but will result in angering G-d.

When we give tzedaka, G-d is silencing our oppressors. G-d asks us Jews, to be righteous and give tzedaka and then calamity will not fall upon us. The prophet explains that G-d has absolute power. We know that it is up to G-d whether there is a war that will happen or when peace will come. G-d tells the Jews that they need to stand together with him, otherwise they should tremble with fear. Those who fight with Jews when we are being righteous will fall into the domain of the Jews. Those who fight with us Jews, will have to obey us. We are told by G-d that He created the smith who blows on the fire of the coal. That is the person who is bringing it to life and brings out from it any object that is needed, for example, weapons.

G-d also created the destroyer to ruin the instrument if need be. The prophet, Yeshayahu, tells Jews that it is actually G-d who controls the weapons in the world. G-d created the smith and gave human beings the idea to forge weapons in fire. It is also the handiwork of G-d to use fire and it is up to the will of G-d to allow that fire to melt iron so that weapons are forged. By reading this, we can see that even if someone is using a weapon to kill, he is in reality only the agent of G-d. That person who is doing the killing, will be held responsible for misusing his free will and G-d is clearly in charge.

An instrument of war that is formed against one will not succeed. The Midrash says we will condemn any tongue raised against us for evil in judgement. G-d has servants and it is their reward from G-d. G-d assures the Jewish people that if we stay as His servants, the nations who want to plot and plan against them, will not be able to harm us. G-d says that there will be Nations continuously trying to go against the Jews. G-d in return will mess up their plots! This happened in Egypt with Pharaoh, he commanded his people to throw every Jewish firstborn into the river! What really happened was, his extermination plan came to naught, but G-d increased the Jewish nation.

Haman wanted to wipe out all the Jews from the earth, but the reverse occurred. The enemies of the Jews were the ones destroyed. Balak and Bilam wanted to curse the Jewish nation, but G-d forced them to bless the Jewish people instead. These are just some ways of how G-d kept his promise of 'Any weapon of war forged against you will not succeed'. This is found in Yeshayahu 54:17. The enemies of the Jews are always trying to wipe us out by using two methods, either physical assault or verbal attacks. During the time of Moses, Balak hired the prophet Bilam to curse the Jews.

In later times the church forced debates between Jews and Christian leaders to "disprove" the truth of the Torah. Yeshayahu issues the Jews that both methods of physical assault and verbal assault will fail. Yeshayahu says that "Any instrument of war formed against you will not succeed, nor any tongue raised against you. This promise stands to stay strong if the Jews consider themselves servants of G-d. The way to demonstrate that we are servants of G-d is to keep studying the Torah and keeping the Torah. There is a small word used in the Midrash, it's zos.

It appears in the verse that reinforces the thought of our nation becoming worthy of blessings that G-d gives us. He will only give us these blessings if we keep fulfilling the Torah. The last part of the Haftara will elaborate about this. Yeshayahu gives the Jews advice on how they could and even now in present time, how we can survive being in exile. The next part of the Haftara will give us advice on how we Jews can end our period of being in exile.

The Midrash provides us with a story that goes more in depth about this. There is a verse telling the Jews anyone who is thirsty go to the water to get your thirst on. This includes those who don't have money, and if they need food they will have access to that too. Everything will be for free, the verse talks about people having access to wine and milk even without paying for it. The reason all of this is free, is because it's the words of the Torah.

The prophet, Yeshayahu invited all the Jews to come and listen to his teachings, he wasn't going to charge a fee and the Midrash wants us to keep in mind that Torah teachers don't get paid for their lessons. Why is the Torah compared water, wine, and milk? It is to teach Jews that these liquids should be kept inexpensive containers, the words of the Torah stay with people who are humble. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, who was mentioned earlier had conversations with the Roman emperor. The Rabbi impressed the emperor with his wisdom.

The emperor's daughter considered the Sage to be ugly. She made a remark about him, that "Such wisdom, but what an ugly receptacle.

Rabbi Yehoshua called her a princess, and asked her in what containers does her father store his wine? Her answer was her father keeps wine containers in earthenware vessels. The Sage said in a mocking voice that a king should use earthenware vessels? He told the princess that everyone was using those and the king could surely afford a container that would be more upscale.

The princess asked the Sage what he recommended for the king to use. The Rabbi said, in the royal palace the king should keep the wine stored in vessels of gold and silver. All of the wine was transferred to how the Rabbi suggested. It didn't take long for people to learn that wine had gone sour. The emperor found out that it was his daughter who had ordered for the wine to be transferred, and he questioned her about it. She pleaded to be innocent and insisted that Rabbi Yehoshua was to blame, for he was the one who gave her this advice. The emperor was so mad and he called for the Rabbi to come forward.

The emperor asked Rabbi why he suggested this advice to his daughter. The Rabbi told him he was only giving an answer to her question, she wanted to know why G-d made the Rabbi so ugly, so the Rabbi showed her that just as wine keeps better in common earthenware vessels it's also connected to the Torah. The Torah is preferred to be with people who are humble and who don't feel a reason to consider themselves superior. The emperor intervened saying, there are many Torah scholars that are good-looking. The Rabbi had a response for that as well, if these Torah scholars were less handsome, they would be even greater scholars.

It is harder for someone who is handsome to refrain from having pride, and the Torah prefers the person to be humble. Rambam said that the teachings of the Torah are to be found only within a person who is humble and subordinate to the Sages of the Torah. It is much harder for someone who is handsome to refrain from having pride and the Torah prefers for the person to be humble. Rambam said that the teachings of the Torah are to be found only within one who is humble. That person is also subordinate to Torah Sages, and they stay far away from contemporary pleasure-seeking and who spend the least time possible on earning a living.

This way that person can occupy themselves with the Torah most of their time. Yeshayahu the prophet, explained the virtues of Torah study. He brings up the idea that we weigh money to buy that which is not bread, and our toil is for that which doesn't satisfy us. It's better to listen to G-d and eat what is good, and then our soul will delight in rich, enjoyable foods. This is the meaning of the delightful teachings of the Torah. Yeshayahu reprimands the people of his generation and ours now too. Yeshayahu states how people are always exchanging the Torah for things of lesser value, which can't satisfy us. One of these things is the alluring and elusive desire to keep collecting more things.

When people have money, it seems they have the potential for keeping themselves happy. It's really only an illusion, the initial exhilaration is soon followed by the moment of truth. That is when a person admits to themselves that their life is empty and meaningless. Torah, is the "true

bread". It keeps a Jew going, it is like bread that nourishes the body. When studying the Torah, a Jew finds real and permanent satisfaction and fulfillment. Jews have to make time for the study of Torah, it is their main aim in life and all other occupations people have is secondary.

Jews are obligated to study Torah on a daily basis. There was an emperor named Alexander the Great. One day he sat down, near a spring and had a meal of salty fish. He dipped the fish into the water, he was trying to wash off the excess amount of salt. When the fish touched the water, the fish became alive again and had a sweet smell to it. The emperor was rather amused and rinsed his hands in the water and washed his face using that same water. He felt very refreshed and said this spring is coming from Gan Eden! He wanted to follow the water to its actual source. Following alongside the stream, he climbed as high as he could until he stood facing a pair of gates that were locked.

Alexander ordered for the door to be open and the reply that came said, this gate would only lead to G-d. Also not anyone could come in these gates, only tzaddikim were allowed to enter. Alexander announced how he was the emperor and not just any ordinary person. Alexander really wanted a souvenir from what was inside the gates. Suddenly the gate was open and he was handed a bone that formed the human eye socket. The emperor put that strange souvenir into his bag of belongings. When he got back home, he was asked by one of the Jewish Sages to show the mysterious thing he received.

Alexander asked the Jewish Sage what was so special about that bone. There wasn't just one Sage, there were a few and they told Alexander to bring a scale. With the scale they were able to show him, the bony frame was placed in one bowl. The Sages said to bring a pile of silver and gold in a different bowl of the balance. The emperor was surprised to see the eye bone outweighed the precious metal, and no matter how much more gold and silver he added, the bowl with the eye-bone stayed down. Alexander wanted to know what this meant, and the Sages said that this was to teach the human eye is insatiable.

It doesn't matter how much gold or silver there is, the insatiable eye will always desire more. Alexander asked if there was anything that could tip the scale the other way? The Sages said to strew a little dust over the eye socket. The emperor did this, and the bowl immediately sank down with a very heavy thud. From this, we learn the lesson that death puts an end to man's ceaseless craving for having riches. This was how the emperor, Alexander was warned from on high to stop his endless travels and accumulation of collecting things. He heard the warning but ignored it.

He continued on his many conquests and collecting as many things as he could get his hands on. The Midrash gives us a quote to remind us of the aftermath of what happened to him. "The dust soon tipped the silver." When he died, he had reached only half of an average man's lifespan. There is a desire people have of secular knowledge. People may enjoy studying subjects other than Torah, but those studies only give the person temporary pleasure. The Jewish soul doesn't benefit in the World to Come when their delights surpass imagination and description.

People will have “weighed money for the stuff that is not bread. It means that the person has wasted their time on using their thirst for secular knowledge, instead of applying themselves to learning Torah. Torah is the purpose of everyone’s main existence.

From the commentary about Alexander, the Great we do learn that he was a very important man. He was granted a spiritual trip to the gates of Gan Eden. When he washed his face in the waters of Gan Eden, it meant that he was animated by the spiritual power that Gan Eden had to offer. He was refused entrance into its gates because going in there was a reward only for those who were tzaddikim. Jews are supposed to incline our ears and come to G-d for the sake of learning torah. G-d is asking us to hear and that our souls will live, for it will be revived at techiyas hamaism and live forever. In the time of the Mashiach, G0d will make an eternal covenant with the Jews. He will promise the Jews they will not be in exile anymore.

He will also keep as many promises to the Jews as He gave to David. G-d promised that David would be king forever. Yeshayahu reassures the Jews that if they listen to the words of the Torah and take them to heart, they will have eternal life. G-d said to the Jews that He made King David be a witness for the nations. When the Jews would see that G-d’s promise of eternal rulership for his dynasty would come true, the Jews would believe every word G-d said. That was the way G-d was going to fulfill His promise.

Mashiach was going to be coming from the seed of David. Mashiach would be a prince and a commander who would rule over the nations. G-d told Mashiach he would bring a nation together that he didn’t know. Not knowing the Mashiach, the people will still come running to do his bidding. The Midrash asks us why that nation will do that, it’s not because of the Mashiach’s military superiority. The nation will do this for the sake of the Holy One Who has beautified the Mashiach by letting the spirit of G-d be in his midst.

This is where the Haftara ends, it makes a promise for the future of the Jewish generation, that our spirituality will be elevated. The spirit of G-d will reside among the Jews. G-d’s spirit will be so desirable by all the nations of the world, they will voluntarily subordinate themselves to the Jewish people and all mankind is going to be united in the service of G-d.

Haftara Re’ey from Isaiah 54:11 and 55:5

We are in the third week of a series of seven haftarot of Consolation. These seven haftarot started on the Shabbat that followed Tisha B’Av. They will continue until we get to Rosh Hashana. In this week’s haftara, G-d addresses the very afflicted Jews in Jerusalem. The people have been in a period of exile and haven’t felt comfort coming from G-d. G-d assures the Jews that they will be restored to a state of full glory. He says that the foundation, the walls, and ground of Jerusalem will be laid with precious stones. The children of Israel will be disciples of the Lord and will enjoy abundant peace. Anyone using a weapon against the Jewish people will not succeed. That weapon will simply fail. The prophet invites those thirsty for water and thirsty for spirituality should start studying the words of the Torah. He promises the nation an everlasting covenant similar to what King David experienced. This is also an illusion to the Messiah, David’s descendant. That descendant will be revered by all the nations of the world. This promise was coming from G-d Himself.

This week's Haftara is trying to get Jews to come closer to G-d. We are in the month of Elul and it's an acronym for Song of Songs. Elul means I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me. If we make an effort to become close to G-d, He in return will come close to us as well. Our efforts to get close to G-d is limited, but for G-d He is not bound by anything. He has so much love for the Jewish people, that He doesn't need to put much effort to become close to the Jewish people. This Haftara tries to explain what this means, it will do that with the use of a parable from a Chabad source. There is a famous king who is loved by his people. Before entering the city, the people go out into the field to meet with the king. Everyone was permitted to go meet with the king and he smiles down at all of his people. When he starts walking in the direction towards the city, the people follow him. When he gets to the palace, no one goes in unless the king permits them to do so.

This story tells us that during the month of Elul, that king is our G-d. He is the one out in the field and He is available to everyone. He receives everyone with a great big smile. He is kind to everyone and accepts them, because of His thirteen attributes of Mercy are shining bright, He grants everyone forgiveness from a place of love. All one has to do is go out into the field and they will become closer to G-d. The simple act of doing teshuva will bring people one step closer to G-d. When Rosh Hashana comes, the king is back in his palace. That is when the awe and fear of His majesty is upon the Jewish people. We respond in a kind way and we accept His kingship. People in the human form will be in awe in front of G-d. It is from this place of being in awe and having fear of G-d that they will do teshuva. Jews's efforts to get close to G-d is always limited, but in the month of Elul, there is a brighter chance than usual. In the month of Elul, from up above. G-d has so much love for every Jew, He finds every one of us to be so precious to Him. In the second verse of the Haftara, G-d said when the Mashiach comes, He will make windows with special stones known as kadkod. It's a precious stone, actually, it's a gemstone.

The Talmud tells us that there is a dispute between two angels. One angel calls the gemstone a shoham and the other one calls it a yashfei. G-d heard the angels arguing with each other, G-d didn't want them to argue. We know that shoham and yashfei meant kadkod. G-d came to the conclusion that the stone would be a bit of a shoham and a bit of a yashfei. This way the angels stopped their arguing and both were right. What is so special about these stones? They are precious because they produce light from within. There are other stones that if you cut and polish them well, the light will reflect in the most beautiful way. The shoham gives its own light and the yashfei lets that light is reflected. The debate between the angels was about the reward Jews would receive when the Mashiach comes.

The angel that said the stones would be yashfei, meant it would be based on the Jews's work, the effort they put in, and their accomplishments as well. I stated earlier that yashfei meant reflecting one's light, in terms of the stones it would depend on how well it was polished and their proximity to light. The other angel that said the stone is shoham said the stone would give its own light. The reward wouldn't be based on human accomplishments, instead, it would be G-d's infinite revelation. Meaning it would be a gift coming from up above. Since G-d has so much love for the Jewish people, He said we would get a reward for both our efforts and that He would give us His infinite revelation as a gift. This is what the month of Elul is all about, having a chance to grow close to G-d. By putting in the effort of getting close to G-d, doing teshuva,

praying, and giving charity to the poor or those in need, we will be rewarded. He will give us His infinite love, His closeness and it will be beyond anything humans could achieve on their own.

Now is the time of opportunity for us Jews, G-d the King is in the field. We should seize the day, we need to put more effort into our Jewish expression. The way to do this is especially through repentance, praying to G-d, and giving to those in need. The haftara concludes with a blessing for ourselves and other Jews around the world, may our efforts bring a sense of pleasure to G-d. May He grant us a happy and sweet New Year. The last thing is may we merit receiving the grandest smile of all, when G-d will say the words, "Your work is done, Mashiach is finally Here"!