

Haftarah

'Nations shall see your deliverance'



*No more shall you be called
Forsaken,
no more shall your land be called
Abandoned.
For your name shall be
My Delight in Her,
and your land shall be called
Married...*

Isaiah 62:4

Connection

In the Jewish liturgical calendar this Haftarah is the last of seven *haftarot* ('the seven of consolation') which are read after the fast day Tisha B'Av and in the weeks leading up to Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year).

Background

This Haftarah comes from 'Second Isaiah' (Isaiah 40-66), i.e., a set of prophecies and traditions associated with a preacher-poet living among the exiles in Babylon in the 6th century BCE whose writings were later attached to the First Isaiah.

Reflect

With this Haftarah the message of consolation (the theme of the previous six weeks) reaches a climax. The prophet proclaims to the exiles in Babylon that salvation is near at hand and will soon be evident, not only to Israel but to all nations (see 62:2; 63:11). Enjoy the variety and beauty of the poetic imagery used; here are eight examples:

- God is described as a victorious warrior who has defeated Israel's enemies (see especially 63:1-6).
- The prophet speaks of the Lord who *'has clothed me in triumph'* and *'robed me in victory'* (61:10). The image of a garment is used elsewhere in scripture, in both Testaments. Can you recall examples? In this Haftarah, see too 63:1-2.
- Victory and triumph are also described as a flame, a blazing torch (62:1).
- *'You shall be called by a new name'*... *No more shall you be called Forsaken'* (62:2,4). What is this 'new name'? See 62:4,12. In the bible to take a new name indicates that one's life has undergone an irrevocable change.
- Marital/wedding imagery (See 61:10; 62:4-5).
- Feasting after harvest (See 62:8-9).
- The clearing of a road for those proclaiming good tidings (See 62:10).
- The winepress, trampled grapes, as an image of divine judgment at the time of redemption (See 63:3-4,6).

Share

- Which image speaks with particular power to you?
- The message of Isaiah is one of extraordinary conviction in the power of the Lord to save. Share something of your experience and struggle in embracing this conviction in your own life, given the fact that so much of our world appears 'unredeemed' and still awaiting healing, wholeness.

Bibliography: Plaut, *The Haftarah Commentary* (NY, 1996); Sarna, ed., *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarat* (Philadelphia, 2002). Scripture quotations: Plaut.