

# HAFTORAH COMMENTARY KI SEITZEI

*by Rabbi Dovid Siegel*

## *Yeshaya 54:1*

This week's haftorah displays Hashem's boundless love for the Jewish people. In the end, after a long painful exile, the Jewish people will be granted permission to return to Eretz Yisroel. Most appropriately, the prophet Yeshaya opens and invites Yerushalayim to rejoice over the ingathering of her exiles. He says, "Rejoice barren city who never expected such an overwhelming influx within your walls...Extend your annexes without interruption...Because your children will inherit the cities of the nations and settle the desolate areas." (54:1-3) The proportions of the Jewish redemption will be so overwhelming that Eretz Yisroel won't be capable of containing it. Yerushalayim will overflow from her newly acquired inhabitants and the surrounding areas will rapidly fill to capacity. The entire Judean hills will be saturated with newly sprouted neighborhoods but the Jewish influx will continue. The new wave of Jews will take possession of the entire land of Israel and settle therein but even these broadened quarters will not suffice. The return will be so encompassing that Zion will truly wonder in bewilderment from whence did all of her people emerge.

Yet the kindness of Hashem won't end here and the prophet continues to describe the setting of the future. Yeshaya tells the Jewish people, "Do not be afraid or embarrassed because your shameful past will never be remembered." (54:4) He adds in the name of Hashem, "I forsook you for a brief moment and I will gather you in with great compassion. With mild anger I concealed My countenance from you and with everlasting kindness I will have mercy upon you." (54:7,8) These passages reflect the concern of the Jewish people over their dark and rebellious past. They hesitate to return to Hashem because their previous wrong doings remain fresh in their minds. They cannot imagine bonding perfectly with Hashem given how unfair they acted towards Him in the past. Hashem responds that they should not hesitate to return because no trace will remain of their earlier ways. Hashem's blessing will be so encompassing that it will be virtually impossible for the Jewish people to relate to their earlier experiences. They will develop such close relationships with Hashem that they will be incapable of imagining what it was like without Him. How could they have ever appreciated life without their close and perfect relationship with Hashem ?!

The prophet continues and reveals to us the merit through which this unbelievable experience will transpire. Yeshaya says in the name of Hashem, "For the mountains may move and the hills may sway but My kindness will never leave you and My covenant of peace will never be swayed." (54:10) In explanation of these words, our Chazal in Yalkut Shimoni (477) share with us a beautiful insight.

They explain that the mountains mentioned here refer to the firm and sound merits of the Patriarchs and the hills refer to those of the Matriarchs. Although the Jewish nation continuously draws upon these merits for its basic existence there are times when even these merits do not suffice. The Jews stray so far from the proper path that they cease to identify with the virtues of the Patriarchs. During such times, Hashem doesn't identify with the Jewish people as children of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs and the mountains and hills - merits of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs - begin to sway and can not be of any assistance. Yeshaya advises the Jews that in those difficult moments they should cleave to acts of loving kindness. In return for their loving kindness Hashem promises to show them His loving kindness resulting in the indescribable proportions mentioned earlier.

With the above insight we begin to comprehend the unbelievable Messianic era awaiting the Jewish nation. The Malbim (ad loc.) explains this merit of loving kindness and notes that, by nature, kindness is boundless. Unlike compassion and mercy which depend upon the recipient's worthiness, kindness is shown without calculation or consideration. The recipient of pure kindness is never deserving of it and such acts are therefore not subject to limitations. In essence whenever Hashem showers His kindness upon someone it is, by definition, unlimited and everlasting. This, incidentally is the deeper meaning of Dovid Hamelech's words in Tehillim, "For His kindness is everlasting." (107:1) Accordingly, when the Jewish people will be the beneficiaries of Hashem's kindness they will experience it in boundless proportions. They will be privileged to establish such closeness to Hashem that they will never be capable of understanding life without Him.

However, in order to elicit true kindness from Hashem the Jewish people must conduct themselves in a very special manner. To this end Yeshaya offers them an inside tip and advises them to cleave to acts of loving kindness amongst each other. When, in the end of time, we will be totally committed to benefiting others Hashem will reciprocate in that same manner. If we will provide for others above and beyond our obligation Hashem will do the same. We now understand that those acts of loving kindness - by definition beyond the call of duty - will truly serve as the keys to our glorious future. Such acts of pure kindness are not subject to calculations and computations and are the true expression of boundless concern for others. Hashem therefore responds with His acts of loving kindness and showers us with His boundless love in the most indescribable proportions. Eretz Yisroel will be continuously expanding to allow for the influx and our association with Hashem will be so perfect that our entire life will revolve totally around Him.