

actually hidden by the darkness in their hearts. Yeshua's warning to us on this matter is quite clear:

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS’” (Matthew 7:22-23; cf. Psalm 6:8).

Being a part of Israel requires responsibility. *We are to be God's light to the nations.* Take this very seriously as you bring your light into this darkened world—to those in search of answers to the mysteries of God!

## ***Haftarah Noach*** **“Walking by Faith”**

Isaiah 54:1-55:5 (A); 54:1-10 (S)

The cataclysmic Flood described in *Noach* (Genesis 6:9-11:32) is undoubtedly the most memorable event that most of you will be considering this week. However, it is the post-deluge Noahic Covenant that God unilaterally established with Noah and his progeny, which is reflected upon by the Prophet Isaiah as he attempted to encourage his contemporaries in Ancient Judah. Ultimately, it is the reference to a “covenant of peace” that the Holy One unilaterally instituted with His people, which is something worthy of shouting for joy.

If you will recall, God was so aggravated with the corrupt and violent direction of the human race that He had to destroy all the people of the Earth, except Noah and his immediate family:

“Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth’” (Genesis 6:11-13).

Further illumination about how an angry God was going to handle evil in the future is recorded after righteous Noah offered up sacrifices to Him as the Flood waters recede. Note that God declared what the evil heart of humanity is, promising to extend grace even though He knew unrighteousness would continue among people:

“Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, **‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease’**” (Genesis 8:20-22).

In a comparative manner, the blessing that God would never forsake Israel is what Isaiah describes as he foresaw and understood the brief moment in time when the Lord in His anger, would hide His face from His idolatrous people, allowing the Babylonian exile to take place. However, as this section of the prophecy declares, the punishment upon Israel would only be

temporary. After briefly forsaking His people, He would eventually restore them with great compassion:

“For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of *one's* youth when she is rejected,’ says your God. **‘For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,’ says the LORD your Redeemer.** ‘For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,’ says the LORD who has compassion on you” (Isaiah 54:5-10).

Here, Isaiah looks back to the ancient Flood in Noah’s time—and then into the future when an eternal covenant of peace will be instituted and never be shaken. These verses are promises that the Jewish people have held onto for millennia. Down through the centuries, whether sent off to Babylon or dispersed into the nations after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, these words have always brought great comfort and hope to many people. We eagerly look forward to their fulfillment some time in the future!

A few verses later, Isaiah describes not only Israel being established in righteousness, but the promise that the Almighty is sovereign over the affairs of His Creation. He not only creates the circumstances that refine His people, but He assures them that no weapon formed against them will prosper:

“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. **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 54:14-17).

For Believers today, it is extremely comforting to know that the immutable Creator is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He does not change and His promises remain forever. “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6).

As our Haftarah reading concludes, the first six verses of Isaiah 55 also remind us that another unilateral covenant, one established with King David, is something that God’s people can look to in order to recognize that the Almighty always keeps His word and promises. This everlasting covenant ultimately points us to the Son of David—our Messiah Yeshua—who will one day rule and reign from Zion over the whole world (cf. 2 Samuel 7:12-17):

“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.** 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.’ **Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near**” (Isaiah 55:1-6).

I have one, very interesting final thought. As you come to the end of this passage, Isaiah states that Israel **“will call a nation you do not know”** and **“a nation which knows you not will run to you.”** What is Isaiah talking about? Is it an ancient nation, or one that during his time did not even exist? Is it possible that Isaiah is referring to a modern-day nation or is he looking into the Millennial Kingdom? Is this a reference to Isaiah’s expectation of the restoration of Israel *involving more than just Israel* (Isaiah 49:6)?

The key to answering these questions may only come at that future time when Israel has finally been glorified. In that glorified state, the people will be seeking the Lord and calling upon Him while He is near. Let us make sure that we are all a part of this restoration, something which requires us to diligently follow Yeshua and obey our Heavenly Father. When we all arrive in His Kingdom, there are doubtlessly going to be many unknown things that He will finally reveal to us!

Our challenge in the meantime is to be a people who seek that place of glorification, recognizing that no matter how far we fall short in our pursuit of Him, God will never forsake us or leave us (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5). He will eventually and unilaterally bring us into His eternal covenant of peace. Such has been God’s promised pattern for dealing with His people since the days of Noah. **May the Holy One hasten the day when His covenant of peace is finally realized!**

## ***Haftarah Lekh-Lekha*** **“Choices That Renew Our Strength”**

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

*Lekh-Lekha* (Genesis 12:1-17:27), our Torah portion for this week, begins by familiarizing the reader with the exploits of the great Patriarch Abraham. In Romans 4 the Apostle Paul later described him as the father of the faithful. While Abraham is noted for his faith in the Almighty, we need not overlook the declared promise of God to bless those who bless Abraham, or contrarily to curse those who curse Abraham. Many of his physical descendants and spiritual onlookers down through the centuries have claimed to build their personal faith and trust in the God of Creation based on His dealings with Abraham:

“And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

Did you note in this often-quoted phrase, which delineates blessings and curses to Abraham’s respective benefactors or enemies—**that God also says that in Abraham that all of the families of the Earth will be blessed?** Is it possible that this reference is to the literal Seed of Abraham who would one day arrive as the Messiah Yeshua Himself? It is absolutely true that Paul appealed to Genesis 12:3 in Galatians 3:8, saying, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, ‘ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.’” The ultimate blessing for all of humanity is the Redeemer and His accomplished work at Golgotha (Calvary). About eighteen-hundred years after the promise was made to Abraham, the blood sacrifice required