

Bereishis

Parshas Bereishis obviously recounts the creation of the universe.

The Haftara for Bereishis is from Yishaya 42:5-43:10.

Let's first begin with why we read Haftara at all. One reason for reading Haftara after the weekly parsha is that in ancient times, the Jews were not allowed to study the 5 books of the Torah, but only those, the remaining books of Nach weren't part of the decree. The sages of the era (around the time of Chanuka) instituted that a portion of the prophets be read that is related to whatever the parsha was supposed to be. Since that custom was instituted, it was never removed even once it became safe to read from the Torah again (it also gives us additional opportunities to say more Brachos).

Yishaya ben Amoz was a significant prophet who lived around 2640 years ago and prophesied for 86 years during the reign of 4 kings. During Yishaya's era, the Assyrian empire arose, and the 10 tribes were exiled. Yishaya the prophet was key to ensuring that idolatry remained outside of Judea, and the Jews of the time remained as strong in their connection to Hashem as possible.

Yeshaya focused on charity and justice to stave off destruction and destitution for the Jews; although his prophecies (about destruction) came true, the other parts about Mashiach, have yet to be realized.

More Haftoras are taken from Yishaya than any other book- and there are sequences of Haftaras that precede and follow the 9th of Av,

because of the prophecy of destruction that would befall the Jews- furthermore, he also offers consolation for the fact that there will be a time when all will be rebuilt.

Based on this; the weekly haftora is connected to the parsha, (or events of the week), and I hope to highlight some of the connection here.

The Haftora begins with Chapter 42 posuk 5 (as opposed to the beginning of the chapter). The first 5 verses begin with talking about the future when Mashiach will be here, and that as the Radak says, he will be accepted by all- because the Truth will prevail.

Posuk 5 (the first posuk of the Haftora) begins with phrases from Yishaya confirming that Hashem created the heavens and the earth, even if there are those who deny such claim accordingly the posuk is in the present tense, because Hashem continuously renews the existence of the universe¹. The first connection to the week therefore is simply, this is the part of Yishaya's prophecy, and words that relate directly to the word as they are written in Bereishis. He affirms Hashem's creating the universe, which obviously is read in the Parsha itself. Yeshaya doesn't offer the "end" (i.e., Mashiach) before reminding us of the history of the universe, and that Hashem created all, and therefore everything that takes place is because Hashem wants it that way. He is also stating it as a fact, so that no one can argue with the trajectory and course of humanity, specifically with us Jews.

Through Yishaya's affirmation of the creation, he is also telling us that we are a light unto the nation, and that there will come a time when we will all be redeemed from the exile. What Yishaya confirms for us is that Hashem is the Master of the Universe; and that destruction

¹ We say in davening, Hamichadesh Bituvo Bichol Yom Tamid- Maseh Bereishis.

may or may not happen, but in the course of history this will take place, as we get closer and closer to Mashiach.

Yishaya prophesied and communicated to the people what will take place, and in hindsight, we now can confirm that everything happened as indicated; therefore, the part about Mashiach coming must also be true.

We can also gain further insight into Rashi's first explanation on the first words/posuk of the Torah. Historians may attribute the influence of Rashi's explanation as part of the context of his life, which was during the crusades, and there was confluence of external threats to Judaism (much like the rise of the Assyrian empire in Yeshaya's time). Rashi was therefore giving a reminder to all those who may argue with the Jewish sovereignty in this world; and over the land of Israel that it is rightfully ours, all we must do is present the Torah and show it. Rashi's influence therefore may or may not have been the social/historical context; rather much like from Yeshaya, that the whole purpose of relaying the "story" of creation, is to remind ourselves that Hashem is in control, and this is Hashem's world, and we cannot remove ourselves from that fact².

The fact that Parshas Bereishis follows Elul, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Sukkos, is not happenstance; it is by divine providence. The events of our calendar (such as the holidays of Pesach etc.) follow a specific timeline due to their occurrence in history, as opposed to the

cycle of the reading of the Torah which is independent of the calendar (for example the exodus of Egypt readings does not coincide with Pesach). Perhaps one can posit that through the Avoda of Elul, Rosh Hashana etc. we are fully able to reaccept the truth that Hashem controls the world, and only now, are we able to being the Torah reading cycle again, with reaffirmed faith in Hashem and His control of the universe. Yeshaya reminds of this, Rashi reminds of this, and the Torah itself reminds us of this.

Given the fact that the outcome of Yeshaya's prophecies took place (for the negative parts) it only stands to reason that the positive parts (the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash and Mashiach) will happen soon. And as Radak states on the opening versus of the chapter in Yeshaya 42, that the truth of Mashiach will prevail in a way that He doesn't have to scream from rooftops or convince people of their truth, rather, it will be obvious and accepted by all- again much like Rashi tells us to do with showing the Torah to the world for those who argue on the Jewish right to Israel, and the Jewish right to exists.

May the prophecy of Yeshaya³ be fulfilled through our charitable acts, and may we merit the seeing of Mashiach and the prevailing truth in our times.

² Even if we get influenced by science and other theories about the origin of the universe, they are equally as plausible to have occurred; and the explanations by (human created) natural order is not mutually exclusive of what the Torah says. Both require a leap of faith to exist, one is just packaged in science (which we know very little about) the other is written in our books.

³ The Alter Rebbe in the closing of Chapter 1 and beginning of Chapter 2 in Lekutei Amairm quote Yeshaya multiple times regarding our Neshamos which were breathed by Hashem as our life force, and that we

cannot "know God". Yeshaya in the first posuk of the Haftora (posuk 5 of chapter 42) states the fact that Hashem breathed a soul into the nation and gave us life. Which is another parallel to the Parsha itself. The Alter Rebbe lays the groundwork in the opening chapters of Tanya to ensure that we know the avoda of our lives as part of the recognition of Hashem's being our life source. The two are interconnected- that is 1) recognizing Hashem as the creator (as Yeshaya etc. state) 2) to recognize that within this there is an Avoda of how to act to bring Mashiach closer.