

MESSAGES FROM ISAIAH



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Dear Parents and Children

Our unique connection to Torah is celebrated twice in the Jewish calendar. The first is the festival of Shavuot, known as Chag Matan Torah (the Festival of the Giving of Torah). The second is the festival of Simchat Torah (the Joy of Torah) which falls after Sukkot. The two festivals are celebrated very differently. On Shavuot the focus is on Torah learning and on Simchat Torah, we rejoice and dance. Each of these festivals has a very different meaning and essence.

The Ten Commandments were given on two tablets (Luchot HaBrit). The Luchot HaBrit were received twice. The first tablets were "Hashem's work and Hashem's writing" - a gift from Hashem regardless of our position as recipients. The second tablets, by contrast, were made by Moshe (Moses) following the events of Chet Ha'egel (the Golden Calf) and the breaking of the first tablets. These tablets represent our repentance and continued efforts.

The first Luchot are celebrated on Shavuot, as we focus on Hashem gifting us the Torah with no mention of our capacity or ability as recipients. The second Luchot relate to Simchat Torah, a festival that focuses on celebrating our completion of the Torah Reading cycle as an achievement. While the festival of Simchat Torah celebrates our efforts in Torah learning and observance, the festival of Shavuot celebrates our deep connection to Torah regardless of our achievements or observance. It is a time when every Jew around the world can receive the Torah with no pre-condition or requisite.

One may conclude that the first Luchot are possibly less significant as they were smashed by Moshe at the bottom of Har Sinai. The Talmud explains: The broken tablets were placed in the holy Ark along with the second intact set (Talmud Bava Batra 14b). The breakages from the first Luchot are placed in the most sacred place in the holy ark together with the second Luchot. I believe they come to serve as a reminder to every Jew, that the gift of Torah will be rewarded regardless of our former level of engagement, learning or observance. Chag Matan Torah is a renewed opportunity for every Jew to reconnect and receive G-d greatest gift to His nation, the gift of Torah.

I feel this message is particularly important following Covid. Many of us were unable to engage with our communities for prolonged periods of time. The Festival of Shavuot is a wonderful opportunity to re-engage in Torah learning and return to our cherished shuls and communities.

This learning booklet for parents and children focuses on the teachings of the Prophet Isaiah. The prophecies of Isaiah focus on our unique ability to revive and recover following the hardest of times. During the years of exile, Isaiah saw Israel's wilderness flourishing and streams running through its deserts. Isaiah was not unaware of the challenges; he embraced the greatest of challenges as an opportunity for revival and growth.

Chag Shavuot Sameach

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ישעיהו הנביא

ISAIAH THE PROPHET

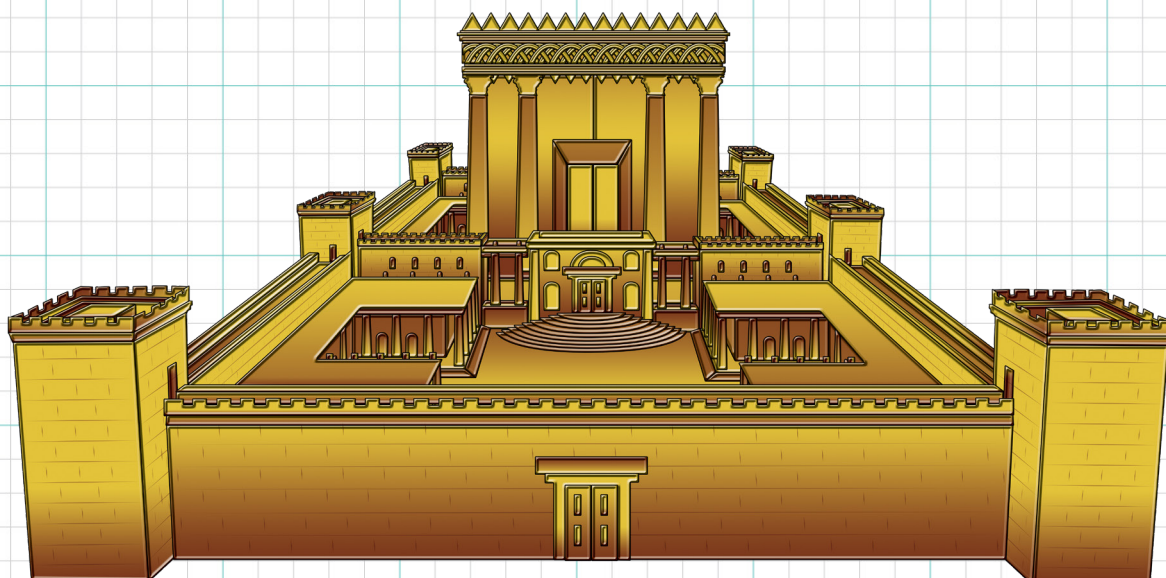
Isaiah (known in Hebrew as Yishayahu) was a Navi (prophet) who lived during the times of the first Beit-HaMikdash (Temple). Isaiah lived in very difficult times because the people of Israel were surrounded by powerful enemies.

The 10 tribes of Israel had been sent to exile (out of Israel) and the remaining tribe of Yehuda (Judah) were living in and around Jerusalem (biblical map attached). Isaiah warned the Jewish people about the forthcoming destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash which was extremely upsetting.

However, Isaiah also delivered a message of hope. His prophecy assured the Jewish people that they will return to the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt in its former glory.



What do you think the name 'Yishayahu' means?



ISAIAH'S FAMILY

As well as being an important Navi, Isaiah was also a family man. His wife is mentioned in Yishayahu with two different names: 'Almah' and 'Neviah' (which means a prophetess).

Our Rabbis teach us that Isaiah's wife also had prophecies and she helped Isaiah deliver important messages from God to the people of Israel. Imagine growing up with a mum and dad who shared prophecies every morning over breakfast! They had three boys and a girl. All their children were named after their prophecies with some long, complicated names....

Girl : Heftzi-Ba - "My joy is in her"

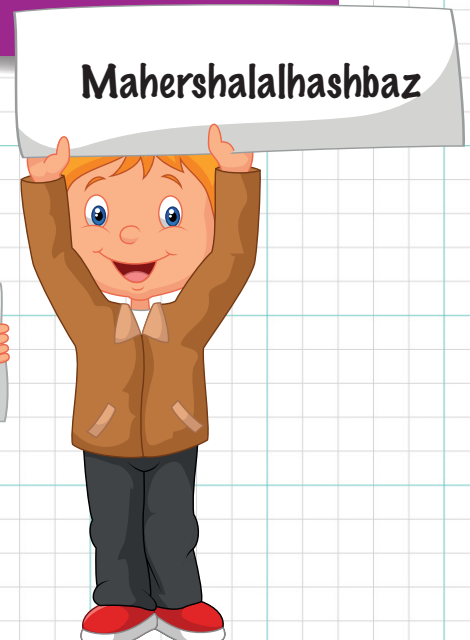
Boy (1): Sha'ar Yeshuv - "The remnant return"

Boy (2): Immanuel - "God is with us"

Boy (3): Maher-shalal-hash-baz - "haste, spoil, speed, prey"



Why do you think the 3rd boy was called "haste, spoil, speed, prey"?



HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Isaiah lived during the reigns of four kings in Judah: Uzziah, Yotam, Ahaz, & Hezekiah. We learn about these kings in the second Book of Kings (Chapters 15-19). Uzziah and Yotam are described as righteous (good) kings. Ahaz (the 12th King of Judah) did not follow the Torah and did not listen to Isaiah.

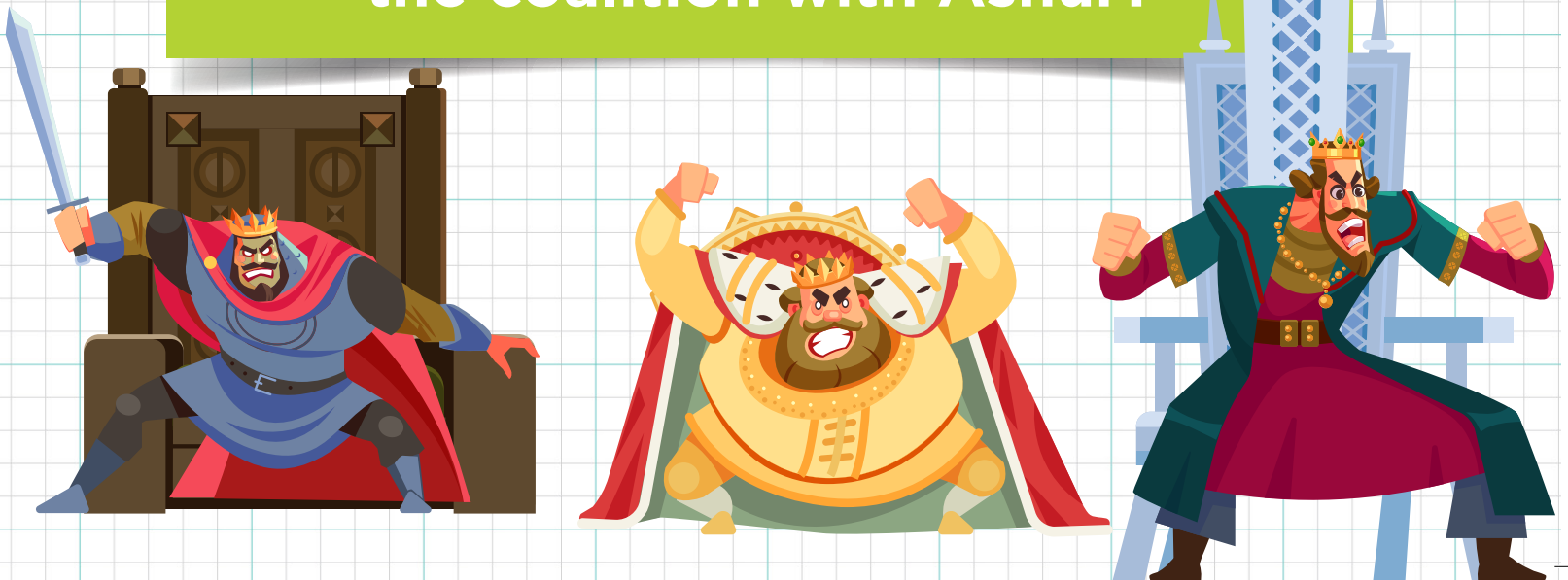
Instead, he formed a coalition (agreement) with the evil King of Ashur (known in English as the King of Assyria). The King of Ashur attacked the tribes of Israel but did not attack Judah because of his coalition with Ahaz.

When Ahaz died and Hezekiah (his son) gained the throne, the evil King of Ashur invaded Judah with a powerful army of 185,000 soldiers. Isaiah was the father-in-law of King Hezekiah, who married Heftzi-Ba. King Hezekiah listened to his father-in-law and decided to put his trust in Hashem.

The people of Judah destroyed their idols and prayed to Hashem for help. Sennacherib, King of Ashur, besieged Jerusalem at night and prepared to invade the city in the morning. Before dawn, Hashem sent an angel who struck down the entire Assyrian army sending Sennacherib “with shame on his face back to his own land”.



Why did Isaiah strongly oppose the coalition with Ashur?



ISAIAH'S MESSAGE

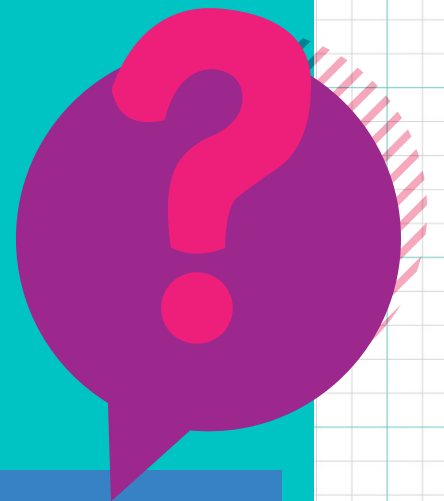
CHAPTER 2

כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן יֵצֵא תוֹרָה וְדִבַּר ה' מִירוּשָׁלַיִם:

*For the Torah shall come forth from Zion
and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem.*

These words are recited while opening the Aron Hakodesh (the holy ark where the Sefer Torah is kept). The Malbim (19th Century, Ukraine) learns from this Passuk that the ultimate wisdom of Torah can only be revealed in Eretz Yisrael. The Talmud (Bava Batra 158b) teaches us that “the air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise”.

A story is told about the Rabbi of Gur who returned from a visit to Jerusalem. His Hassidim asked him: “Rebbe (Rabbi), what new wisdom did you acquire during your visit?” His response was: “In Jerusalem I learnt that true wisdom is knowing when to be silent!”



**Does this apply to all places in Israel or
only to the city of Jerusalem?**



ISAIAH'S MESSAGE CHAPTER 12

הִנֵּה אֵל יְשׁוּעָתִי אֲבַטַּח וְלֹא אֶפְחָד כִּי עֲזָי
וְזָמַרְתִּי י-ה ה' וְהִי־לִי לְיְשׁוּעָה:

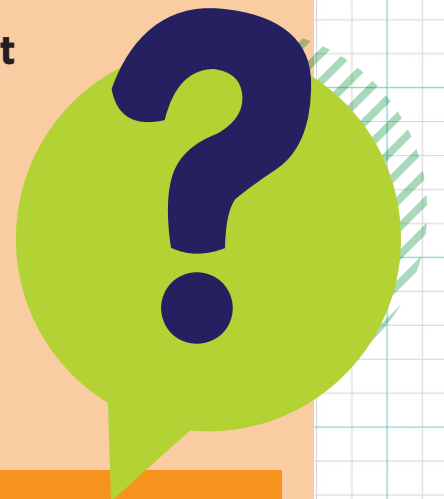
*Behold the God who gives me triumph! I am confident,
unafraid; For Hashem is my strength and might.*

וּשְׂאֲבַתְּם מַיִם בְּשִׁשׁוֹן מִמַּעַיְנֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה:

Joyfully shall we draw water From the fountains of triumph.

The Abarbanel (15th Century, Italy) relates Isaiah's message about drawing water from the fountain to Torah learning. Just like one cannot survive without water, the Jewish nation cannot survive without Torah learning.

Drawing water from the fountain requires effort just as Torah learning requires effort. The 'fountain of Torah' is available to every Jew as we all received the Torah together, united, on Har Sinai.



**When do we recite these words
and why?**



ISAIAH'S MESSAGE

CHAPTER 43

כֹּל־הַגּוֹיִם נִקְבְּצוּ יַחְדָּו וַיֹּאסְפוּ לְאֻמִּים מִי בָהֶם יִגִּיד זֹאת
וְרֵאשֵׁנוֹת יִשְׁמִיעֵנוּ יִתְּנוּ עֵדֵיהֶם וַיִּצְדְּקוּ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱמֶת:

All the nations assemble as one, The peoples gather. Who among them declared this? Let them produce their witnesses and be vindicated, That men, hearing them, may say, "It is true!"

Shimon Dubnov, was a Russian historian and a passionate Zionist (Russia, 19-20th Century).

In 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, supporting the establishment of a "National home for the Jewish people".

When Shimon Dubnov witnessed these historic events he recalled this verse from Isaiah.

Thirty years later, on the 29th November 1947, the United Nations voted in favour of establishing a Jewish State!



Did the UK support the establishment of Israel in 1947?



ISAIAH'S MESSAGE

CHAPTER 43

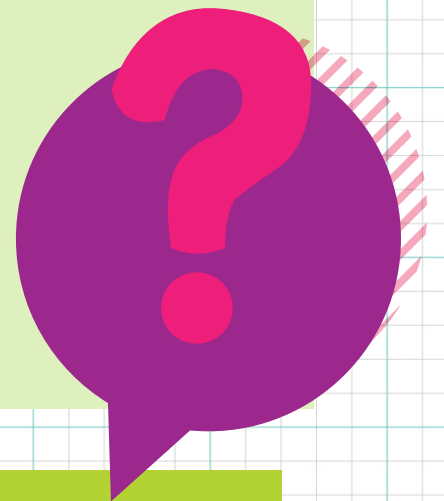
עוֹרֵי עוֹרֵי לְבָשִׁי עֶזְרָךְ צִיּוֹן לְבָשִׁי בְּגָדֵי תְּפָאֲרֶתְךָ
יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ

*Awake, awake, O Zion! Clothe yourself in splendour;
wear your robes of majesty, Jerusalem, the holy city!*

The Metzudat David (Prague, 17th-18th Century) explains the concept of Jerusalem's awakening. Before an exciting Simcha or special occasion, we wake up early, wear our very best clothes and wait with great anticipation for the event.

In the same way, the holy city of Jerusalem 'wakes up', rejoices and waits with great anticipation for the Jewish people to return.

The first two words "Uri Uri" also appear in Lecha Dodi.



How do these words relate to Shabbat?



ISAIAH'S MESSAGE

CHAPTER 58

Our final message from the book of Isaiah truly relates to us all in these difficult times.

הַלֹּא פָּרַס לְרֵעִי לַחֲמֹץ וְעַנְיִים מְרוּדִים תְּבִיא בְּיַדְךָ כִּי־תִרְאֶה עָרֹם
וְכִסְיֹתוֹ וּמִבְּשָׂרְךָ לֹא תִתְעַלֵּם:

Share your bread with the hungry, and welcome the wretched poor into your home; When you see the naked, clothe him, and do not ignore your own kin.

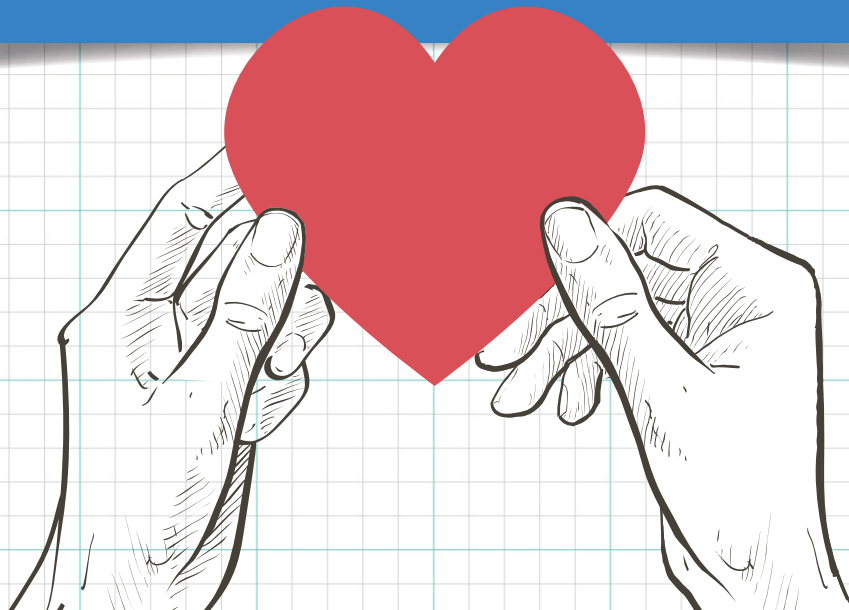
“Tzedakah and Chessed (acts of kindness) are the equivalent of all the mitzvot of the Torah” (Jerusalem Talmud, Pe’ah 1:1). As Jews, we regularly emphasise the importance of giving to charities and performing acts of kindness for others. Very rarely do we take the opportunity to do Tzedaka at home for our family.

The prophet Isaia is teaching us that Tzedaka at home is the most important form of Chessed.

Supporting our parents and helping our siblings, particularly in times of difficulty, is the best Tzedaka of all. A helping hand, a kind word and a loving smile will bring the Simcha of Shavuot to your family and the joy of Torah to your home!



Why is the book of Ruth (Megilat Rut) known as the ‘Book of Chessed’?



The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel.



Tyre

Dan

Israel

Ramoth

Beth-shean

Megiddo

Samaria

Shiloh

Bethel

Jericho

Joppa

Ekron

Jerusalem

Gaza

Hebron

En-gedi

Beersheba

Judah

Moab

Edom

Egypt



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