

HAFTARAH FOR B'REISHIT

Isaiah, chapter 42, verse 5 to chapter 43, verse 11

42:5. Thus says the Eternal God,
the One who created the heavens and
stretched them out,
who made the earth
and all that grows in it,
who gives breath to its people
and spirit to all who walk on it:

6. I, the Eternal, have called you in
righteousness,
and taken you by the hand.
I am the One who created you
and made you a covenant people,
a light to the nations:

7. to open eyes that are blind,
to bring the captive out of confinement,
those who sit in darkness,
out of the dungeon,

8. I am the Eternal—that is My name.
I will not share My glory with another,
My praise with idols.

42:5 כֹּה־אָמַר הָאֱלֹהִים יְהוָה

בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטִיהֶם

רָקַע הָאָרֶץ וְצִאֲצָאֶיהָ

נָתַן נְשְׁמָה לָעַם עָלֶיהָ

וְרוּחַ לַהֲלֻכִים בָּהּ:

6 אֲנִי יְהוָה קָרָאתִיךָ בְצִדְקָה

וְאַחֲזַק בְּיָדְךָ

וְאַצְרִיךָ

וְאַתְּנֶה לְבְרִית עִם

לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם:

7 לְפַקֵּחַ עֵינַיִם עִוְרוֹת

לְהוֹצִיא מִמִּסְגַּר אֲסִיר

מִבַּיִת כְּלֹא יֹשְׁבֵי חֹשֶׁךְ:

8 אֲנִי יְהוָה הוּא שְׁמִי

וְכִבוֹדִי לֹא אֶחָתֵן

וְתַהֲלֹתַי לְפִסִּילִים:

Commentary

5. *Thus says the Eternal God.* The Prophet is certain that God's voice speaks through him (see our *General Introduction*).

6. *Covenant people.* Our translation reads the Hebrew as if it read עם ברית (*am b'rith*), with *am* meaning Israel, who will lead everyone on earth to a covenant with God.¹ But since the order in the text is ברית עם (*b'rith am*, literally "covenant of people"), some understand *am* to refer to humanity as a whole, which provides the meaning: "I have appointed you [Israel] to provide a covenant for humanity, a light to the nations."²

A light to the nations. See the essay below. Rashi believes that the charge is addressed to Isaiah himself: he is to lead the nations to see the divine light.

7. *To open eyes that are blind.* From lack of light in the dungeon of despair where the people dwell. (The dungeon was also very real for some; thus, King Jehoiachin was jailed for thirty-seven years.)³

8. *That is My name.* The name by which God revealed the Divine Presence to Moses (see Exodus 3:15).⁴