

Haftarah of Parashat No'ah

Isaiah 54

No Shame; No Disgrace

In this chapter, Isaiah likened the Jewish people in their exile to a childless woman whose barrenness has been reversed. As we read in v.1: "For the children of the wife forlorn shall outnumber those of the espoused." Continuing with the imagery of such women, he added: "Fear not, you shall not be shamed; no not cringe, you shall not be disgraced. For you shall forget the reproach of your youth and remember no more the shame of your widowhood" (4). Drawing a distinction between shame (*bushah*) and disgrace (*cherpah*) and addressing the poetic structure of the verse, Malbim (Rumania, 1809-1879) commented:

Shame is self-inflicted while disgrace is imposed by others. The sections of this verse are parallel: "Fear not, you shall not be shamed... For you shall forget the reproach of your youth" and "no not cringe, you shall not be disgraced... and remember no more the shame of your widowhood." The "woman" intended by the lyrical verse is the community of Israel. In her youth, while she still had a husband and dwelt in her land in the company of the Lord, her "spouse," experienced shame due to her evil deeds because she was unfaithful to her spouse and worshipped other deities. However, she was not disgraced by others because all the other nations [also] were idolatrous.

Therefore, the prophet promised this barren woman whose children and husband would return to her in the future, that she should have no fear of being ashamed of her poor actions, "For you shall forget the reproach of your youth" because God will forgive and forget them. Afterwards, while she was widowed on account of her husband abandoning her, she will no longer feel shame because she will no longer worship idols, but she was disgraced by others on account of her widowhood, alienation, and isolation. Therefore, God promised her that her exile would no longer be the cause for other nations to disgrace her and that she would no longer have reason to hide her head in shame of her exile and "remember no more the shame of your widowhood."

54:1-3 expansion of the borders of Zion

54:4-5 do not fear

54:6-8 His anger is momentary; His compassion is eternal



ישעיהו נ"ד

(1) Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear, Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail; For more are the children of the desolate Than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. (2) Enlarge the place of thy tent, And let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations, spare not; Lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. (3) For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left; And thy seed shall possess the nations, And make the desolate cities to be inhabited. (4) Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed. Neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, And the reproach of thy widowhood shalt thou remember no more. (5) For thy Maker is thy husband, The Lord of hosts is His name; And the Holy One

(א) רְנִי עֲקָרָה לֹא יִלְדָה פִּצְחִי רְנָה וְצַהֲלִי לֹא חָלָה כִּי רַבִּים בְּנֵי שׁוֹמְמָה מִבְּנֵי בְּעוּלָה אָמַר יְיָ. (ב) הִרְחִיבִי מְקוֹם אֹהֶלְךָ וִירִיעוֹת מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ יְטוּ אֶל תַּחֲשֹׁכֵי הָאָרֶץ מִיתְרֶיךָ וִיתְדוֹתֶיךָ חֲזִקִי. (ג) כִּי יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל תִּפְרָצִי וְזָרְעֶךָ גּוֹיִם יִירֶשׁ וְעָרִים נְשֻׁמוֹת יוֹשִׁיבוּ. (ד) אֶל תִּירָאִי כִּי לֹא תִבוֹשִׁי וְאֵל תִּתְכַלְּמִי כִּי לֹא תַחֲפִירִי כִּי בִשֵׁת עֲלוֹמֶיךָ תִשְׁכַּחִי וְחֲרַפַּת אֱלֹמְנוֹתֶיךָ לֹא תִזְכְּרִי עוֹד. (ה) כִּי בִעֲלֶיךָ עֲשִׂיךָ יְיָ צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ וְגֹאֲלֶךָ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי כָּל הָאָרֶץ יִקְרָא. (ו) כִּי כְּאִשָּׁה עֲזוּבָה וְעֲצוּבַת רוּחַ קְרָאךָ יְיָ וְאִשֶּׁת נְעוּרִים כִּי תִמָּאֵס אָמַר אֱלֹהֶיךָ. (ז) בְּרַגְעַת קִטּוֹן עֲזוּבַתֶּיךָ וּבְרַחֲמִים גְּדֹלִים אֶקְבְּצֶךָ. (ח) בְּשִׁעָף קִצְף הִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי רָגַע מִמּוֹד וּבְחֶסֶד עוֹלָם רַחֲמֶיךָ אָמַר

משלי כ"ז(ד) אכזריות חמה **ושטף אף** ומי יעמד לפני קנאה:

Wrath is cruel, and anger is overwhelming; But who is able to stand before jealousy?

54:9-10 the oath
 54:11-12 rebuilding of Zion
 54:13-17 peace will reign therein



ישעיהו נ"ד

thy Redeemer. (9) For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah Should no more go over the earth, So have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, Nor rebuke thee. (10) For the mountains may depart, And the hills be removed; But My kindness shall not depart from thee, Neither shall My covenant of peace be removed, Saith the Lord that hath compasssion on thee. (11) O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, And not comforted, Behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, And lay thy foundations with sapphires. (12) And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, And thy gates of carbuncles, And all thy border of precious stones. (13) And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; And great shall be the

to destroy. (17) No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their due reward from Me, saith the Lord.

גְּאֹלֶךָ יְיָ. (ט) כִּי מִי נָח זֹאת לִי אֲשֶׁר
 נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מֵעַבְרַת מִי נָח עוֹד עַל הָאָרֶץ
 כִּן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִקְצֶרְךָ עָלֶיךָ וּמִגֶּעַר בְּךָ. (י)
 כִּי הַהָרִים יִמוּשׁוּ וְהַגְּבָעוֹת תִּמּוּטֶינָה
 וְחִסְדֵי מֵאֲתָךְ לֹא יִמוּשׁ וּבְרִית שְׁלוֹמִי
 לֹא תִמּוּט אָמַר מִרְחֻמֶךָ יְיָ. (יא) עֲנִיָּה
 סִעְרָה לֹא נִחְמָה הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי מֵרַבִּין
 בַּפּוֹד אֲבִנֶיךָ וְיִסְדְּתֶיךָ בְּסַפִּירִים. (יב)
 וְשִׁמְתִי כְדָכַד שְׁמֶשְׁתֶּיךָ וְשַׁעֲרֶיךָ
 לְאַבְנֵי אֶקֶדַח וְכָל גְּבוּלֶךָ לְאַבְנֵי חַפְזִין.
 (יג) וְכָל בְּנֵיךָ לְמוֹדֵי יְיָ וְרַב שְׁלוֹם
 בְּנִיָּה. (יד) בְּצַדָּקָה תִכּוֹנְנֵי רַחֲקֵי
 מֵעֶשֶׂק כִּי לֹא תִירָאִי וּמִמַּחְתָּה כִּי לֹא
 תִקְרַב אֵלֶיךָ. (טו) הֵן גּוֹר יְגוֹר אֶפְס
 מֵאוֹתֵי מִי גֵר אֲתָךְ עָלֶיךָ יְפוּל. (טז)
 [הִנֵּה] (הֵן) אֲנֹכִי בְּרִאֲתִי חָרַשׁ נִפְחָ
 בְּאֵשׁ פָּחַם וּמוֹצִיא כָּלִי לְמַעֲשָׂהוּ

וְאֲנֹכִי בְּרִאֲתִי מִשְׁחִית לְחַבֵּל. (יז) כָּל
 כָּלִי יוֹצֵר עָלֶיךָ לֹא יִצְלַח וְכָל לְשׁוֹן
 תִּקּוּם אֲתָךְ לְמִשְׁפַּט תִּרְשִׁיעֵי זֹאת
 נִחְלַת עַבְדֵי יְיָ וְצַדִּיקְתֶּם מֵאֲתֵי נְאֻם
 יְיָ.

9:15
 ולא ילויס ארץ
 נתיק לארץ...
 9:11
 ומתקן את ביתי
 אלה

Daniel Elazar

The Idea of Covenant

A covenant is a morally-informed agreement or pact based upon voluntary consent, established by mutual oaths or promises, involving or witnessed by some transcendent higher authority, between peoples or parties having independent status, equal in connection with the purposes of the pact, that provides for joint action or obligation to achieve defined ends (limited or comprehensive) under conditions of mutual respect which protect the individual integrities of all the parties to it. Every covenant involves consenting (in both senses of thinking together and agreeing) and promising. Most are meant to be of unlimited duration, if not perpetual. Covenants can bind any number of partners for a variety of purposes but in their essence they are political in that their bonds are used principally to establish bodies political and social.

The definition of covenant in law as a binding promise is a straightforward statement of a concept of far-reaching importance in the relations between individual groups and peoples. In modern law, covenant is defined as "a promise or agreement under consideration, or guarantee between two parties, and the seal or symbol of guarantee is that which distinguishes covenant from modern contract." Theopolitically, "a covenant is a promise that is sanctioned by an oath..." accompanied by an appeal to a deity or deity to 'see' or 'watch over' the behavior of the one who has sworn and to punish any violation of the covenant by bringing into action the curses stipulated or implied in the swearing of the oath." For a theological or political significance, "the oath was usually accompanied by a ritual or symbolic act."⁵

Thus, two words used as synonyms for *brit* in the Bible are *shevuah* and *alah*. The first means oath and the second is used as a synonym for covenant but has its origins in the word for cursed. This reflects the way in which a covenant embodies mutual oath-taking. The oath-taking basis of covenanting is even more pronounced in the medieval Latin term for confederacy, *coniuratio*, with *iuratio* the Latin term for oath. This may be a translation of the German *eidgenossenschaft* from *eid*, the German word for oath.

The third difference that deserves attention is that a democracy emphasizes "rights," while Judaism stresses "obligations." The ultimate goal or primary purpose of American democracy is to confer rights on its citizens. In fact, the American Declaration of Independence speaks not merely of "rights" but "inalienable rights," rights that cannot be transferred, bartered or taken away. These "rights" belong to the individual under any and all circumstances and are enjoyed unconditionally. What are these "inalienable rights?" In the words of the Declaration of Independence, they are "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." It is otherwise with Judaism, where the focus is not on rights, but on obligations. This is the essential meaning of the claim that Judaism is "a covenantal religion." Jews are understood to have made a commitment that is not contractual, but covenantal. And, because the commitment is covenantal, our obligations are as "inalienable" as the rights granted in a democratic society.

What is the difference between a covenant and a contract? A contract is hypothetical and conditional. In agreeing to a contract, we express our readiness to assume obligations on *condition* that the other party to the contract also assumes obligations toward us. If he refrains from fulfilling his obligations to us, then we are free of our commitments to him. Indeed, many philosophers have based their concept of democracy on the notion of the contract, that is, the "social contract." Citizens in a society enter into a contract in order to gain a certain number of privileges. It is a contractual, that is, a conditional arrangement.

The Jewish approach is radically different. It is covenantal rather than contractual. The idea of the covenant is that we enter into a relationship in which we assume obligations unconditionally. The unconditional nature of the covenant is reflected in Abraham's question to God at the *Berit ben ha-Betarim*, במה אדע כי אירשנה (Gen. 15:8), "How do I know that I will inherit the Holy Land?" The Ramban wonders why Abraham asked this question when God had already promised the land to him. He answers that Abraham was afraid, שמא יגרום החטא—perhaps, as a result of possible transgressions committed by his descendants, God will be free of His promise and will find it unnecessary to fulfill it. Abraham therefore sought assurance that God's commitment to his descendants would be unconditional, i.e., covenantal rather than contractual. He wanted to be confident that, whether the Jewish people would be deserving or not, his descendants would inherit the Land of Israel. And, in fact, he received that assurance.



ישעיהו נ"ה

(1) Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye for water, And he that hath no money; Come ye, buy, and eat; Yea, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. (2) Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your gain for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, And let your soul delight itself in fatness. (3) Incline your ear, and come unto Me; Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, Even the sure mercies of David. (4) Behold, I have given him

(א) הוֹי כָּל צֹמֵא לִכְוֹ לַמַּיִם וְאֲשֶׁר אֵין לוֹ כֶּסֶף לִכְוֹ שִׁבְרוּ וְאָכְלוּ וּלְכֹו שִׁבְרוּ בְּלוֹא כֶּסֶף וּבְלוֹא מְחִיר יֵין וְחֶלֶב. (ב) לָמָּה תִשְׁקְלוּ כֶּסֶף בְּלוֹא לֶחֶם וַיִּגְיַעְכֶם בְּלוֹא לְשִׁבְעָה שְׁמָעוּ שְׁמוֹעַ אֵלַי וְאָכְלוּ טוֹב וְתִתְעַנֵּג בְּדִשְׁוֹן נַפְשְׁכֶם. (ג) הִטּוּ אָזְנוֹכֶם וּלְכֹו אֵלַי שְׁמָעוּ וְתַחֲי נַפְשְׁכֶם וְאֶכְרְתָה לָכֶם בְּרִית עוֹלָם חֲסָדֵי דָוִד הַנְּאֻמָּנִים. (ד) הֵן יַעַד לְאוֹמִים נִתְתִּיו נֶגִיד וּמִצְוֶה לְאֹמִים. (ה) הֵן גּוֹי לֹא תִדַע תִּקְרָא וְגוֹי לֹא יִדְעוּד אֱלֹהִיד יְרוּצוּ לְמַעַן יִי אֱלֹהִיד וְלִקְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי פִאֲרָד. (ו) דְרָשׁוּ

Rashi identified the water in v. 1 with Torah, in which interpretation he was followed by Yosef Kara, Ibn Ezra, and Radak. Eliezer of Beaugency understood the water to signify whatever path provided the greatest possibilities of success and S.D. Luzzatto took it as a symbol of the widespread success that would accompany the redemption. Malbim interpreted it as follows:

The prophets likened Torah and mitzvot to bread and provisions because they sustain the soul just as bread and water nurture the body... and just as food for the body contains items that one cannot live without them—such as water, which is [obtained] free of charge, and foodstuffs like bread, which much be purchased for money—so it is with ideas and deeds. There are things that one truly cannot live without, such as the belief in the existence of God, His Providence, and [the avoidance of] certain deeds that even civil religion requires, such as murder, robbery, and the like, that resemble water, as well as things that resemble bread, such as the study of Torah and mitzvot and [the performance of] constant mitzvot such as prayer, Shabbat, and the like. Just as in corporeal terms there are things that one can live without and which were created only for the purpose of indulgence and pleasure, so are there soul-foods that pamper the soul, such as intellectual knowledge and all truths that are derived from analysis and mitzvot that promote piety. They resemble wine and fatted meats that are only for pleasure.