

יתרו

Isaiah

6:1-7:6; 9:5-6

Part 1

Isaiah, a member of the royal household in Jerusalem, preached for some forty years during the second half of the 8th century B.C.E. At that time, according to the prophet, idolatry was rampant; the upper classes lived in ostentatious luxury; and the God of the Covenant was all but forgotten by large masses of the people.

The sidrah contains the revelation at Sinai, an event that was witnessed by the entire people of Israel. Similarly, the haftarah brings us the personal revelation of God to Isaiah, which began his prophetic career.

6:1] In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw my Liege seated on a throne, high and exalted, with a robe whose train filled the temple. 2] Seraphim stood about, each with six wings—two covering the face, two covering the body, and two to fly with. 3] And each called to the other:

“Holy, holy, holy is the God of heaven’s hosts, whose Presence fills all the earth!”

4] At the sound of the call, the foundations shook and the temple filled with smoke.

5] “Woe is me!” said I, “I am lost; for I am a man of impure lips, and I live among a people of impure lips, yet these eyes of mine have seen the Sovereign, the God of heaven’s hosts.”

6] But one of the seraphim flew over to me with a live coal, which he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7] He touched my lips with it, saying:

6:1] *In the year that King Uzziah died.* Most likely sometime between 742 and 733 B.C.E. One can assume that Isaiah wrote this section in his later years, as an autobiographical recollection.

Filled. This verb is repeated in verses 3 and 4.

2] *Seraphim stood about.* The prophet perceives angelic creatures who were attending the Eternal.

3] *Holy, holy, holy.* In the Bible, the root קדש (*k-d-sh*) refers to a visceral or emotive experience of the divine, especially in connection with the sanctuary. | Later, in rabbinic Hebrew, the same root comes to mean “to set aside, to be apart,” as in *kiddushin* (“nuptials”).

ו] בְּשֵׁנֵת-מוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ עֲזַיָּהוּ וְאַרְאָה אֶת-
אֲדֹנָי יֹשֵׁב עַל-בֶּסֶט רָם וְנוֹשֵׂא וְשׂוּלְיוֹ
מְלֵאִים אֶת-הַהֵיכָל: 2 שְׂרָפִים עֹמְדִים |
מִמַּעַל לֹו שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם לְאֶחָד
בְּשֵׁתַיִם | יְכַסֶּה פָּנָיו וּבְשֵׁתַיִם יְכַסֶּה רַגְלָיו
וּבְשֵׁתַיִם יְעוֹפֵף: 3 וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל-זֶה וְאָמַר
קָדוֹשׁ | קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
מְלֵא כָל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:

4 וַיִּנְעֻוּ אֲמוֹת הַסָּפִיִם מִקוֹל הַקּוֹרֵא וְהַבַּיִת
יִמְלֵא עָשָׁן:

5 וְאָמַר אֲוִי-לִי כִי-נִדְמִיתִי
כִּי אִישׁ טְמֵא-שִׁפְתָיִם אָנֹכִי
וּבְתוֹךְ עַם-טְמֵא שִׁפְתָיִם אָנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב

כִּי אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינָי: [6
וַיַּעַף אֵלַי אֶחָד מִן-הַשְּׂרָפִים וּבִידוֹ רִצְפָה
בְּמִלְקָתָיִם לָקַח מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: 7 וַיַּגַּע עַל-
פִּי וַיֹּאמֶר

Presence. In the Tanach, כְּבוֹד (*kavod*) often describes the [radiant] glory of God.

4] *The foundations shook.* This, says Rashi, was an earthquake that (according to the Tanach) occurred during Uzziah’s reign.

5] *Impure lips.* A metaphor for speech and its misuse. (Compare Exod. 6:12; haftarah with Shof’tim, Isa. 52:1.)

Have seen the Sovereign. Isaiah thus feels he is doomed. Compare Exod. 24:10-11; 33:20; Num. 12:8.

6] *Live coal.* A metaphor: God’s challenge was like a burning coal.

Part 2