

## **Isaiah 40:11-18, 21-22**

Though it's not part of the haftarah, the chapter begins with an image of the Exodus being repeated, to bring Israel back from captivity.

**Isaiah 40:3** - "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

The New Testament saw this new Exodus as the spiritual redemption achieved by the death of Christ, with John the Baptist as the voice preparing the way.

The Torah portion speaks of Moses leading his flock, and now the Isaiah passage begins with a picture of God as shepherd of Israel.

**Isaiah 40:11** - "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

The next verses could be heard as God's response to Moses' complaints and his reluctance to respond to God's call. i.e., who do you think you are? Do you think you need to be counseling ME?

**Isaiah 40:16** - "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing."

Egypt therefore, is not to be feared by Moses.

(Verses 19-20 are skipped. Many scholars think they are out of place here and instead go with the condemnation of idolatry in **Isaiah 41:21-24**)

The passage ends with another emphasis on God's omnipotence.

**Isaiah 40:22** - "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:"

## **Moses and Isaiah**

The Talmud says the signs of the staff becoming a serpent and his hand turning leprous were given to Moses because he had slandered Israel when he said, "They will not believe me."

While Isaiah, says the Midrash, was walking up and down in his study he heard God saying, "Whom shall I send ?" Then Isaiah said, "Here am I; send me!" Thereupon God said to him, "My children are trouble-some and sensitive; if thou art ready to be insulted and even beaten by them, thou mayest accept My message; if not, thou wouldst better renounce it" (Lev. R. x.). Isaiah accepted the mission, and was the most forbearing, as

well as the most ardent patriot among the Prophets, always defending Israel and imploring forgiveness for its sins. But when Isaiah said, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5) he was rebuked by God for speaking in such terms of His people (Canticles Rabbah 1.6).