

Triennial Torah Study – 2nd Year 14/05/2011



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Ex 14	Isaiah 1-3	Ps 120	John 4:1-42
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Exodus 14

This has got to be one of the great chapters in the entire bible. I love this chapter.

I again urge you to read Exodus, Another study of the facts to learn about this great event.

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also urge you to read about the hardness of Pharaoh's heart at

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/?page_id=437 titled Wooden Shoes, Wooden Head and Wooden Listen.

Isaiah 1-3

THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Isaiah's father Amotz was himself a prophet. According to rabbinic tradition, Amotz was the brother of King Amatziahu (son of King Jo'ash) of Judah (Megillah 10b), and thus Isaiah was a scion of the royal House of David. His Hebrew name Yishayahu (= "God will save") signifies the promise of salvation and consolation that is the main theme of his prophecies. Isaiah's wife's name is unknown: she is simply referred to as "the prophetess" (Is. 8:3). A number of their children are mentioned in our texts and they were given names alluding to various aspects of Israel's national destiny (Is. 7:3; 7:14; 8:3).

Isaiah was one of the key links in the chain of the Torah tradition: he received it from the prophet Amos and transmitted it in turn to the prophet Micah (Rambam, Introduction to Mishneh Torah). Isaiah's prophetic ministry began on the day of the great "quake" when King Uzziah entered the Temple Sanctuary to try to offer incense (see Rashi on Isaiah 6:1 and on Amos 1:1) and continued throughout the reigns of Yotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah into the reign of Menasheh (who killed him, Yevamos 49b). Isaiah prophesied for longer than all the other prophets and is said to have lived until the age of 120. He mainly prophesied before the king

and his ministers. He is considered the greatest of the prophets (Yalkut Shimoni). Isaiah saw all that Ezekiel saw in his prophecy of the Divine Chariot, but while Ezekiel was like a simple villager who once saw the king (because he prophesied outside the land of Israel) and was so impressed that he told all the details, Isaiah was like a man from the great capital (he prophesied in Israel): being accustomed to seeing royalty, he was less overwhelmed by what he saw (Chagigah 13b).

In Isaiah's time the people were far from Torah observance, and King Ahaz energetically promoted idolatry and licentiousness. There were no limits on people's maltreatment of one another and corruption was rife. Isaiah repeatedly warned and rebuked the people, asking them to remember God's great goodness to Israel in each generation. Although he delivered many prophecies relating to the surrounding gentile nations and their destined destruction, the majority of his prophecies consist of consolation to Israel. All the harsh prophecies that Jeremiah delivered against Israel were preceded and sweetened in advance by Isaiah's prophecies of salvation (Eichah Rabbah 1). "What was unique about Isaiah causing him to prophesy more than all the other prophets about Israel's destined future wellbeing? It was because he accepted the kingship of heaven upon himself with greater joy than the other prophets" (Tanna d'vei Eliahu 16).

ISAIAH CHAPTER 1

Although chosen as the introduction to his book, the "vision" contained in this first chapter was not Isaiah's first prophecy – that is contained in chapter 6 (see Rashi on verse 1 of our present chapter and on Isaiah 6:1). This opening prophecy was given during the reign of Hezekiah, after the Ten Tribes had already gone into exile, as indicated by the fact that it is addressed to Judah and Jerusalem (Rashi on v 1).

Of the four kings mentioned in the first verse, only Ahaz was truly wicked, yet even in the reigns of the other righteous kings such as Yotham, "the people still acted corruptly" (II Chron. 27:2) and they were not whole-hearted with HaShem. For this reason Isaiah opened his

rebuke with phrasing closely echoing that of Moses' last rebuke to Israel, "HA-AZEENU! Give ear Oh heavens. and listen Oh earth." (Deut. 32:1). The only difference is that Isaiah switched around the two verbs, calling on the heavens to LISTEN and the earth to GIVE EAR. Thus both the heavens and the earth had each heard both expressions and would be able to testify on Israel's day of calamity that the people had been duly warned (see Rashi on v 2).

"I have reared and brought up children but they have rebelled against Me" (v 2). God has remained faithful to Israel, elevating them above the other nations, but they have failed to reciprocate and act accordingly. An ox knows its owner and does not refuse to plow; a donkey knows who feeds it and does not refuse to carry its load. But although Israel was "acquired" and became "owned" by God through His redeeming them from Egypt, and although they were fed by Him with manna in the wilderness, they did not show gratitude by observing His commandments (see Rashi on v 3).

The people have been repeatedly smitten yet continue to repeat all the deeds that have brought their blows upon them (Rashi on v 5). V 5-8 depict the national malady in terms of an illness that has left the entire organism seething with painful wounds that have not been softened with soothing oil – i.e. even the merest hint of some thought of repentance was absent from people's hearts (Rashi on v 6).

“Your land is desolate, your cities have been burned with fire.” (v 7). The reign of King Ahaz in particular had been catastrophic for Judah, which was ravaged by the armies of Israel and Aram, while the Edomites attacked from the south east and the Philistines captured the major towns in the lowlands (II Chron. v 5-7 & 17-18 etc.). Likewise in our times, following the 1967 Six Day War and the return to Israeli sovereignty of extensive territories making up the Promised Land, the secularist orientation of the country's ruling elite has led to the unilateral surrender of most of these territories, so that “as for your land, strangers devour it in your presence” (v 7). As a result “the daughter of Zion” – the few remaining faithful Jews – have been left abandoned and isolated (v 8). Were it not for God's mercy, the entire nation would have suffered the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (v 9).

“Hear the word of HaShem, captains of Sodom . people of Gomorrah ” (v 10). The prophet is complaining that the people have become as corrupt as the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were legendary for their wickedness.

“Why do I need the multitude of your sacrifices.?” (v 11). At the same time as the people were sacrificing at their own private altars and cult centers, they continued bringing sacrifices to the Holy Temple on the festivals and new moons etc. In verses 11-15 the prophet warns the people that the outward rote observance of the Temple sacrificial rituals is meaningless and unacceptable to God without inner devotion and penitence. “My Soul hates YOUR new moons and festivals” (v 14): the people did not celebrate them in the name of HaShem but for their own personal gratification. [Rabbi Nachman once quoted this verse to his followers when criticizing them for holding too many festive gatherings when they should have been devoting themselves to prayer and Torah study! Siach Sarfey Kodesh.]

“Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean.” (v 16). Verses 16-18 contain ten expressions of purification and self-correction, corresponding to the Ten Days of Penitence from Rosh HaShanah to Yom Kippur and to the ten verses relating to Kingship, Remembrance and the sounding of the Shofar recited in the New Year service (Rashi on v 16).

“Come now and let us reason together.” (v 18) – “you and Me, so that we will know who has acted badly to whom, and if it is you who have acted badly towards Me, I still give you hope that you may repent” (Rashi ad loc.). “But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of HaShem has spoken” (v 20) – “And where did He speak? ‘And I shall bring the sword against you’ (Leviticus 26:25; Rashi on verse 20 of our present chapter). [Note this is what we were referring to in our opening address about anger and how it relates to the Sabbatical cycles just as Rashi has said]

V 21-23 depict the total corruption of justice that had become prevalent in the city that was intended to be full of justice. Once it could be said that “righteousness dwells in it” (v 21) – because “the morning Temple sacrifice atoned for the sins of the previous night while the afternoon sacrifice atoned for those of the day” (Rashi ad loc.). But now orphans were unable to persuade the judges to hear their cause, and as a result the case of the widow never even reached the judges at all – because having heard from the orphans how futile their efforts had been, the widow would not even attempt to gain a hearing (see Rashi on v 23). Likewise today many feel that the legal system has become so cumbersome that it is futile to seek justice.

Even as the prophet warns that God will take vengeance on His enemies, he promises that God will eventually restore Israel’s true judges and counselors (v 25-26). The phraseology of our thrice-daily repeated prayer in the twelfth blessing of SHMONAH ESRAY, “restore our judges.” is based upon verse 26.

” Zion will be redeemed with justice and her penitents with charity” (v 27). Wealth, military power and the like cannot bring about Israel’s redemption, but only justice, penitence and charity!

Isaiah chapter 1 v 1-27 is read as the Haftara on Parshas Devarim on the Shabbos before Tisha B’Av, which is known as Shabbos Chazon (“Shabbos of the Vision”) after the first Hebrew word of the text.

ISAIAH CHAPTER 2

“And it shall be at the end of days that the mountain of HaShem’s House shall be established on the top of the mountains.” (v 2). Isaiah immediately follows his prophecies of harsh retribution in the previous chapter with this beautiful consolatory vision of the future restoration, which is also prophesied in nearly the exact same phraseology in the prophecy of Isaiah’s disciple Micah (4:1ff, see RaDaK ad loc.).

“Wherever it says, ‘At the end of days’, this refers to the days of Mashiach” (RaDaK on verse 2 of our present text).

“HaShem’s House will be established on the top of the MOUNTAINS” (v 2). The simple meaning is that the Temple Mount will be exalted above all other mountains and all the nations will give it honor and come there to serve God instead of the gods they used to serve on all the high mountains (Metzudas David). However the Midrash says that in time to come God will bring Mount Sinai, Tabor and Carmel together and build the Temple upon them (Psikta), implying that the Temple is bound up conceptually with the Giving of the Torah at Sinai and the miracles performed for Deborah and Barak at Mt Tabor and for Elijah on Mt Carmel. “Come, let us go up to the mountain of HaShem, to the House of the God of JACOB” (V 3).

The reason why the Temple is particularly associated with Jacob rather than Abraham and Isaac is discussed at length in The House on the Mountain by Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum based on Pesachim 88a).

“And he shall judge between the nations and decide among many people, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares.” (v 4). “The judge will be King Mashiach: If any war or claim arises

between one nation and another, they will come before King Mashiach for judgment because he will be master over all the nations and he will decide between them and determine who is at fault. For this reason there will no longer be any war between one nation and another, because he will make peace between them and they will not need weapons and they will break them down in order to make agricultural implements” (RaDaK on v 4).

Following this prophecy of Israel ‘s glorious future, Isaiah returns to his reproof to the nation (vv 5-8). The people have turned to foreign religions and taken foreign wives, fathering alien children who take up all their attention (v 6). They are obsessed with the pursuit of wealth and military might (v 7).

Vv 9ff evoke God’s coming Day of Judgment, when all the haughty and arrogant will be cast down. “This will be in the days of Mashiach, when all the nations will gather together to fight against Jerusalem, and then they will see that neither their silver or gold nor their might nor the multitude of their forces will avail them” (RaDaK on v 9). “And HaShem alone shall be exalted on that day” (v 17) – “The world will last for six thousand years, and for one thousand years it will be desolate, as it says, ‘And HaShem alone shall be exalted on that day’” (Talmud Rosh HaShanah 31a).

“And the idols shall utterly be abolished” (v 18). RaDaK (ad loc.) comments: “Even though idolatry has already ceased among the majority of nations today, there are still people who worship idols in the Far East . but in the days of Mashiach all the idols will be completely destroyed.”

“And they shall go into the holes in the rocks and the caves of the earth for fear of HaShem and for the glory of His majesty.” (v 19). On the fearful Day of Judgment, people will be so ashamed of their lifelong obsession with materialism that they will seek to hide themselves away. “On that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold” (v 20): with the coming of Mashiach, people will understand that wealth is of no importance, because only Torah and good deeds are of enduring value.

ISAIAH CHAPTER 3

“For behold, the Master, HaShem of hosts, will take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff.” (v 1). RaDaK (ad loc.) explains: “The previous section spoke of the retribution against the wicked and how they will be destroyed in the days of Melech HaMashiach. The new section tells how He will now [i.e. soon, prior to the days of Mashiach] carry out judgment against the wicked in Jerusalem and Judah , and how all the great people among them will die through hunger or the sword, leaving only the young and foolish. The prophet calls God ‘the Master’ in order to inform them that He is in control and that it is in His hands to destroy and to build, to give satisfaction or to make people hungry, but the wicked do not think that He is the Master and that He watches over their deeds, for if they did they would not sin and they would not go beyond the bounds of His commandments.” [The Next Sabbatical cycle is the cycle of the sword and it also comes with famine]

Vv 1-3 depict the coming loss of all the leaders and sages of Judah leaving only fools and jesters to rule over them (v 4) which will destroy all the norms of respect for elders and worthy members of the community (v 5). The dearth of true leaders will cause people to turn to anyone wearing a smart coat appealing to him to lead them (v 6), but he himself will know that he is unworthy: “I will not be a healer for in my house is neither bread nor clothing” (v 7). The Talmud darshens this reply as indicating his admission that he was never a regular student in the Beith Midrash and therefore knows neither Bible nor Mishneh nor Gemara – and therefore lacks all the qualifications for true leadership (Shabbos 120a). [Many feel that Israel today suffers from a terrible dearth of quality leaders and wonder which of the current candidates for leadership could possibly take the nation out of its predicament.]

The collapse of the social fabric and the crisis of leadership are the results of the people’s rebellion against HaShem in turning from His Torah (v 8). They do not even deny their sins (v 9). The prophet cries out to them to correct the distortions in their speech whereby “they call evil good and good evil” (see Isaiah 5:20): instead they should declare and affirm that it is the righteous who are good and who will eat the fruits of their works (verse 10 in our present chapter) while the evil of the wicked will wreak vengeance upon them (v 11). But the people have turned everything upside down, allowing children and women to rule over them, making all their pathways crooked (v 12). These ruling women (NASHIM), on whom the prophet elaborates later in this chapter (vv 15ff), may literally be women [as in Israel today, where in the tradition of Golda Meir, the current speaker of the Knesset, the Foreign Minister and even the President of the Supreme Court are all women, in defiance of Torah law, Rambam, Hilchos Melochim 1:5]. Alternatively, these NASHIM are NOSHIM, “those who have slipped” (cf. Gen. 32:32), i.e. men who have fallen from Torah observance (see Rashi and Targum Yonasan ad loc.).

The prophet continues to put forward God’s complaints against the corrupt leadership that has consumed the “vineyard” – i.e. the rest of the people, robbing the poor in their very homes (vv 14-15).

His main complaint is that “the daughters of Zion are haughty.”, strutting with the utmost immodesty and every kind of affectation in order to allure new partners in their immorality (v 16). Because of this God will smite them on the crown with leprosy (v 17) and remove all their ornaments and fancy clothing (vv 18-24).

According to rabbinic tradition (Midrash Rabbah Shemos 41:5), verses 18-24 enumerate twenty-four kinds of ornaments with which it was customary to bedeck brides, and these twenty-four kinds of ornaments in turn correspond to the twenty-four books of the Bible, which are the “ornaments” of those Torah sages who are fully familiar with them. [The 24 books of the Bible are: the 5 books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve, the 5 Megilloth, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.]

The association of the bridal ornaments with the books of Biblical wisdom suggests that the criticism of the prophet against the “daughters of Zion” who used their ornaments for pompous self-aggrandizement are directed against the kind of Torah scholars who use their knowledge and proficiency as a “sword of arrogance” in order to rule over others. These self-seeking scholars cause the corruption of leadership, which in turn brings immorality (see Likutey Moharan II, 5:5-6).

Isaiah prophesies that “on that day” (v 18) – i.e. “in time to come, when the Holy One blessed be He will come to restore Israel to His service” (Rashi ad loc.) God will remove all these ornaments of pride and sweep away this entire false leadership (vv 25ff).

Psalms 120

Plea for deliverance from deceitful enemies (Psalms 120)

As the first song of ascents in the first set of three (of the five sets of three), Psalm 120 is a lament while in “distress” (verse 1). However, if the latter part of verse 1 is translated as in the NKJV, “and He [God] heard me,” then the distress mentioned in this verse would seem to be a former one-forming the basis for the appeal for help in the present distress. Yet it may be that the latter part of the verse should be rendered, “and He has heard me”-in which case the present distress is the one intended, the poet merely expressing his confidence in God to help him or perhaps having received some actual assurance. Still, not knowing exactly how and when matters will be resolved, he continues to pray for deliverance (verse 2).

The deliverance he seeks is from lying deceivers (same verse). And he considers that consequences will eventually befall them-apparently expecting God to judge them accordingly (verse 3). Verse 4 mentions sharp arrows and burning coals from a broom tree, a large desert shrub with roots that can be made into charcoal. It is not clear if this is referring to the lying words of the enemies here and the damage they do (compare 57:4; 64:3; Proverbs 25:18; 16:27; Jeremiah 9:3, 8) or to the just judgment in kind that God will bring on them for it, as the NIV translates it to mean.

Verse 5 of Psalm 120 mentions dwelling among “Meshech” and the “tents of Kedar”-equating this with dwelling too long “with one who hates peace” (verse 6) or “among those who hate peace” (NIV), the plural meaning supported by the “they” in the next verse. Meshech was a gentile nation (Genesis 10:2), which was in Old Testament times located near the Black Sea.

The descendants of Meshech later migrated north and may be found today among the people of Russia, the name Moscow helping to provide this identification (see the Bible Reading Program comments on Ezekiel 38). Kedar was the second son of Abraham’s son Ishmael (Genesis 25:13), from whom sprang “a great tribe of Arabs settled on the northwest of the [Arabian] peninsula and on the confines of Palestine.... The tribe seems to have been one of the most conspicuous of all the Ishmaelite tribes, and hence the rabbins call the Arabians universally by this name” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary, “Kedar”).

As the nomads of Kedar lived southeast of the land of Israel and the people of Meshech were far to the north, we are left to ponder why the psalmist says he dwells among both (Psalm 120:5). It may be that he has gone from living with one to the other. Some see a prophetic association-as a large portion of the Jewish people in recent centuries have lived in Russia and among Arab nations (the state of Israel itself being in the midst of Arab enemies). On the other hand, many believe the psalmist to be speaking metaphorically of other Israelites-that is, in their dishonesty and mistreatment of him they were behaving not as God's covenant people but like these other far-off foreigners. Alternatively, some have postulated this translation of the verse: "Woe is me, whether I dwell in Meshech, or I dwell among the tents of Kedar!" In context, the meaning would then seem to be that no matter where he lives in this world, the psalmist remains in hostile territory-facing lying enemies who don't want peace.

Interestingly, two different words are used for "dwell" in verse 5: garti ("sojourn") and shakanti ("tabernacle"). "These verbs," says The Expositor's Bible Commentary, "are significantly chosen. Even though the psalmist may have enjoyed a permanent residence, he felt as if he was no more than a sojourner among his contemporaries. He did not feel at home among an ungodly people" (note on verse 5). Indeed, God's people are to be temporary dwellers in this world-looking for the future homeland of the Kingdom of God (Leviticus 25:23; 1 Chronicles 29:15; 1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13-16).

In this light, we should note verse 7. The beginning of the verse, though translated as "I am for peace," is literally "I peace." The poet's whole being is consumed with the desire for peace-to make peace as he is able and desiring the peace that God's Kingdom will ultimately bring. Yet the antagonists have no interest in peace. They are for war (compare Isaiah 59:8). This psalm, then, is one of crying out to God for relief from the circumstances of dwelling in a hostile world. "This may have set the stage for believers to make their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In Zion they would be among the people of God. In Jerusalem they would hear the words of truth. In the temple they could pray for the peace of God (122:6; 125:5; 128:6)" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 120:5-7).

Moreover, the annual festivals themselves portray God's plan for the salvation of mankind. The joyous Feast of Tabernacles provides a small foretaste of the peace and happiness that will at last envelop the world under the reign of the Messiah- when the sojourn of God's people in this wicked world at last comes to an end.

John 4:1-42

This week I want to focus on the Living waters that Yeshua spoke to the Samaritan woman about.

In Leviticus 23:34-36, we read that Sukkot (The Feast of Tabernacles) was to last seven days with a holy convocation (Sabbath) on the eighth day. The eighth day was considered part of the feast even though it was a separate holiday. It is called Shemini Atzereth, and literally means the

eighth conclusion. While it is the conclusion of Sukkot as well as the Fall Feasts, most importantly it is the conclusion of all the seven Levitical Feasts. It is also called the Festival of Living Water because at this time many prayers are sent up to Yehovah for dew and rain to prepare the ground for the seed for next year's crop. Without this living water there would be famine and death.

It was at this festival that Yehshua declared himself to be the Messiah and this would be proven before one year would elapse. Yehshua was fulfilling Shemini Atzereth, not just giving life for one year but giving eternal life forever.

Yehshua said, "if any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." When he said this, there was division among the people. Some said he was a prophet while others said he was the Christ (Messiah). John 7:37-42.

During Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) a priest would draw water in a golden pitcher from the pool of Siloam and pour it onto the altar. Now on the eighth day, during the Festival of Living Water, Yehshua made the statement that He is the author of the true living water that gives eternal life.

During Shavuot, Yehshua's disciple Peter, spoke in the Temple. He said to the gatherers, Yehovah has made Yehshua whom you crucified both Lord and Messiah. When the people heard this, the multitude said "what must we do to be saved?" His answer was "repent and be baptized in the name of Yehshua the Messiah for the remission of sins and you shall receive Yehovah's Holy Spirit." Three thousand Jewish worshippers at the Temple believed, were baptized and then received the Holy Spirit. A short time later five thousand more worshippers did the same thing.

When the people were baptized they were immersed into living waters. This is the mikveh. We find the importance of this in Jeremiah.

Jer 2:13 "For My people have done two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters¹, to hew out for themselves cisterns, cracked cisterns, which do not hold water.
Footnote: ¹See 17:13.

Jer 17:13 O ?????, the expectation of Yisra'el, all who forsake You are put to shame. "Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken ?????, the fountain of living waters."¹ Footnote: ¹See 2:13.

???? is the fountain of living waters.

This reasoning is what Yehshua is referring to when He says in Joh 4:13 ????? answered and said to her, "Everyone drinking of this water shall thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water I give him shall certainly never thirst. And the water that I give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

This is why Yehshua spoke at the eighth Day feast as He did.

Joh 7:37 And on the last day, the great day of the festival, ?????? stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me, and let him who believes in Me drink. 38 "As the Scripture said, out of His innermost shall flow rivers of living water."1 Footnote: 1Isa. 44:3, Jer. 2:13, Jer. 17:13, Zech. 14:8, Ps. 36:8,9, Prov.14:27, John 4:10, John 6:63, 1 Cor. 10:4, Rev. 7:17, Rev. 21:6, Rev. 22:1 & 17. 39 And this He said concerning the Spirit, which those believing in Him were about to receive, for the Set-apart Spirit was not yet given,1 because ?????? was not yet esteemed. Footnote: 1Ezek. 36:26-27, Joel 2:28-32, Acts 1:4-8, Acts 2:4 & 33, Acts 10:44-47, Acts 11:15-16, Eph. 5:18.

That set apart spirit was to be poured out on Shavuot which is Pentecost and is what we are counting towards. It is this very spirit that can be quenched as we have spoken about above concerning our bad attitudes.

Although Zechariah speaks of living waters flowing to the east and west and everyone thinks this to be the Gihon Spring it is in truth the Holy Spirit which will flow from Jerusalem, from the throne of Yehovah to all parts of the world.

Zec 14:8 And in that day it shall be that living waters flow from Yerushalayim1, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea, in summer as well as in winter. Footnote: 1Rev. 22:1-2.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of Elohim and of the Lamb.

Rev 22:2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Rev 7:16 "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike them, nor any heat,

Rev 7:17 because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them and lead them to fountains of waters of life. And Elohim shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."