

שבת ראש חודש

*Isaiah, chapter 66, verses 1-24*

**Introduction**

*Connection of haftarah and Shabbat:*

This haftarah is read whenever Rosh Chodesh (the New Moon) falls on a Shabbat, and verse 23 provides the obvious link: "From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, says the Eternal One, all flesh shall come to worship Me."

*The setting:*

The Second Isaiah, the author of this prophecy, shared his people's exile in Babylon (6th century B.C.E.). We do not know his real name, and at some later time his writings were attached to those of the First Isaiah, who lived well over a century earlier.

The haftarah is taken from the last chapter of the book and seems to come from a time when delivery from exile had already begun. The Prophet's message in the previous chapter (65) appears as a denunciation of those who had disregarded King Cyrus' offer allowing Jews to return to their homeland. Now Isaiah addresses those who are prepared to go back.

For more on Second Isaiah, see our *General Introduction*.<sup>1</sup>

*The message:*

1. In view of God's greatness, what kind of temple will you build to encompass the Divine Glory? [This should be followed by verse 5, which apparently was misplaced due to a scribe's error:] When you do it with concern for God, you will rejoice, while those among you who choose not to participate will experience disgrace. (66:1-2, 5)
  2. Illicit and repulsive pagan practices will bring shame on their practitioners. (66:3-4)
  3. The marvelous birthing of Zion. (66:7-9)
  4. The wonderful fate that awaits Israel upon the return of the exiles. (66:10-13)
- Postscript. Every New Moon and every Shabbat, people everywhere will come to worship the God of Israel. (66:23)