HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : נח

This week's Haftorah is taken from the Sefer Yeshayohu.
Sefaradim read from Chapter 54 from verse 1 to verse 10
Ashkenazzim continue till Chapter 55, verse 6.

1. In this Haftorah, Yeshayohu comforts the Jewish People in exile with a vision of the future, when HaShem will publicly take us back again as His Chosen People. He describes that idyllic time in the future in terms of endearment and great love, using, as Yeshayohu often does, the metaphor of HaShem as the husband and the Jewish People as the wife who are reconciled in love and compassion — but this time, for always.

2. Some of the expressions used by Yeshayohu are famous for their portrayal — so powerful and at the same time so beautiful — of the wondrous time when HaShem and His People will be together again. The Novvi repeatedly makes the point that HaShem's reconciliation with His People will be permanent. "The mountains may go; the hills may be removed — but My love for you will never again be taken nor My covenant of peace ever be removed." The time of our long exile and banishment, with all the cruelties that we were made to suffer, will be as a mere moment in comparison with our being back with HaShem, which will be forever, says Yeshayohu. That is, although the years of exile seemed interminably long, nevertheless in the context of the vast sweep of time that is the history of HaShem's Chosen People, HaShem's anger will be seen as but a short moment. Terrible indeed have been the hardships and cruelties inflicted upon us during our years of banishment, says the Novvi, but the kindness of HaShem towards His People will be an everlasting kindness. "You might have been as a forsaken wife — but would I then push you away forever?"

3. There is a precursor, a sign, of this promise of the great future to come, of the time when HaShem will take us to Him again, never again to cast us aside in anger. That precursor is another promise by HaShem, this one not only to the Jewish People but to all Mankind, and it is the link to this week's Sidra. It is the promise that HaShem made to No'ach, the father of the new Mankind, that HaShem would never again bring a Great Flood upon the whole world. "As I have sworn never to bring the Waters of No'ach to again destroy the world," says Yeshayohu in his message from HaShem, "so, too, I swear never to be angry with you nor to ever again sharply rebuke you." The comfort lies in the fact that there has indeed never been another Great Flood and so too will HaShem's promise of the future come true.

4. HaShem promises that "any weapon that is made to hurt you will fail, every tongue that speaks against you will be confounded by the facts of your righteousness" when HaShem proves the goodness of His People to all the Nations of the world. "See! I have established you as My witnesses to the nations, you are to be a prince and a guide for all Mankind" for through the Jewish People, all of humanity can be elevated and find blessing.

5. Besides the mention of the Great Flood of No'ach and the promise of HaShem not to bring another, there is another connexion between the Sidra and this Haftorah. The Great Flood was brought to destroy a horribly corrupted world, but as a result of this destruction, a better world emerged — from destruction came rebirth. So, too, through the tribulations of the Jewish People in exile, they are cleansed and purified and prepared for their role as leader and teacher of Mankind, to usher in a new world of righteousness and justice and brotherly love between all peoples. It is an awesome responsibility and is our sole purpose in being HaShem's Chosen People.