

Isaiah 60, verses 1-4

Lesson Goals for this and the next two lessons:

- a. To explore the interaction between human actions and Divine actions in solving the Jewish people's problems.
- b. To develop skills in breaking down a large prophetic unit into sections and "unpacking" the arguments in each section.
- c. To correlate the imagery and arguments in this passage to those found elsewhere in Isaiah, and to understand how the book of Isaiah includes many internal references and examples of "intertextual" discussions.

Frontal Teaching: Background

Begin with a review of the introduction (slide 2). Ask students to identify the reasons for which the Second Temple did not fulfil Jews' expectations, expectations which were based on the First Temple.

In identifying these reasons, the teacher should elicit from the students the following highlights:

- the political situation of "Judah" as a part of the Persian Empire
- the non-participation of many Jews from Babylonia
- the lack of a visible sign of the Divine Presence.

Ask students: Can these issues be solved by human agency or only by divine intervention?

Entertain a short discussion on this issue, and ask what might constitute a clear sign of divine intervention.

Workshop teaching: verses 1-2.

Using the word –bank in slide 3, ask students to draw an illustration of these verses. (Do not erase the illustration till the end of the lesson; we will need it later.) Students should be able to recognize the darkness/light and nations/Israel dichotomies, but the teacher should challenge them further. Ask:

- What does "ki va orech" mean? Whose light has arrived? Students should recognize that this is the light of Jerusalem
- What is the source of this light? Students should recognize that this is from God's Kavod that is shining on Jerusalem. For this purpose, the teacher should unpack and carefully translate the last six words of verse 2.

The teacher can then elicit comparisons to the Mishkan and to Har Sinai using slide 3. Note that in both of those cases, Kevod Hashem has a luminous component.

Ask students:

- What additional aspects of Kevod Hashem are visible here, beyond those noted in the Mishkan and Har Sinai? Students should be able to recognize that here, Kevod YHashem serves to distinguish Israel from the nations.

The teacher should press the point further, using slide 4. Ask why such a distinction is necessary in Bayit Sheni, when it was not present in earlier cases. Students should understand that the Jewish people were at a political disadvantage at the time of the Second Temple, and that the “distinguishing Israel” feature of the light serves to address two problems:

- a. The lack of a visual symbol of God’s presence at the time of the founding of the Second Temple;
- b. Israel was politically weak and felt “overshadowed” by the Persian empire at the time of the founding of the Second Temple.

The light of God shining on Jerusalem serves to solve both of these concerns.

Workshop teaching:

Ask students to read verse 3. A short word bank is on slide 5. Ask them what they should now add to the illustration. Students should realize that the light is attracting nations from around the world.

Ask them where else in Yeshaya they have seen Jerusalem become an attractive place for nations of the world. They should remember the end of days vision in Chapter 2.

Then, using slide 6, explore why the nations come to Jerusalem in chapter 2. Focus on two key questions:

- a. What attracts the nations? (In chapter 2, the nations seem to be attracted by the elevated status of Jerusalem. In chapter 60, they are also attracted by the elevated status of Jerusalem, but that status is created by a direct divine action- the light. The point is that ch 60 emphasizes God’s role in attracting the nations, but this is a fairly subtle and secondary point.)
- b. What acts are the nations doing once they arrive in Jerusalem? Students should recognize that in ch. 2, the nations’ seek to learn God’s ways and accept his sovereignty, thus eliminating the need for war. However, what are the nations going to DO in ch. 60?

Ask this question, and then refer the students to the worksheet on verse 4. Note that the starred question is an extension activity for brighter students.

Review of Worksheet:

Since the worksheet is very brief (5 min), the teacher should then review the verse itself (slide 7) with the students. Even the weakest students should have understood from the worksheet that verse 4 describes the return of Jews to Jerusalem, and the stronger students (who answered the starred question) will understand that the gentile nations are supposed to facilitate the return of the Jews to Jerusalem.

Conclusion:

In concluding this unit, the teacher should review the introductory slide (reproduced as slide 8), with its 3 problems, and ask students to write a short answer essay (half-page) explaining which of these problems have been solved in these 4 verses, and which remain partially solved.

In reviewing these essays, the teacher should note that:

- a. There is a clear sign of divine presence; students may object that it is not in the Temple, and that is a valid point which will be developed later in the chapter.
- b. Jerusalem is now a central attractive city in the world, and no longer “under” the Persian empire. Students may object that the nations are arriving, and “dumping” the Jews, and then leaving: this is a valid objection, and the status of Jerusalem is discussed further in the subsequent verses (next lesson!)
- c. This new status of Jerusalem attracts many Jews.

The conclusion should be that some progress has been made toward solving these issues, but more remains to be done.