

## From Ashes of *Tisha B'Av* to the *Haftarot* of Comfort and Consolation

August, 2009

The *Haftarot* for the seven Sabbaths that occur between *Tisha B'Av* and *Rosh Hashanah* are called *sheva d'nechamata*, the seven (*Haftarot*) of consolation. And five of the seven *haftarot* occur in this month of August. Each Shabbat morning during this month we will read a section from the prophet Isaiah. During these weeks, the messages from Isaiah are not just of our faltering and our spiritual decline. The messages are also about comfort, consolation, covenant, and peace.

As Isaiah speaks God's words, it seems to be just the message that we need to hear at this point on our journey. We have just come through *Tisha B'Av* – our time to remember the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. As liberal Jews, we have broadened our vision of *Tisha B'Av* to include our own personal and collective destructions – the losses of our loved ones that we have experienced during the past year. It is a time to come together as a community to mourn our losses, and, as we mourn together, we hopefully begin to feel comforted.

Our tradition gives us seven weeks of prophetic wisdom, just at the time we need it, to emerge from the ashes of *Tisha B'Av* to a period of consolation and comfort that leads us to the beginning of the New Year. In *Haftarat Va'Etchanan* (week 1), Isaiah says, "*Nachamu, Nachamu ami*, comfort, comfort my people" (Is. 40:1) – right to the heart of the matter, and just what we need at this moment. *Haftarat Eikev* (week 2) continues the theme, "*Ki nicham Adonai Tzion*, For God shall comfort Zion" (Is. 51:3). *Haftarat Re'eh* (week 3) reaffirms God's covenant with Israel, and *Haftarat Shoftim* (week 4) reiterates God's comforting us.

Comfort, covenant, and peace come together for us in *Haftarat Ki Teitzei* with one of our tradition's most impactful verses, "For the mountains may move and the hills be shaken, my kindness shall not move from you, nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says *Adonai* who takes you back in love (Is. 54:10)."

How healing it is to have these messages of comfort, covenant, and peace. And yet, it is not enough. It is not enough for God, alone, to do these things. It is upon us to act from the Godliness in ourselves in order to console, and comfort each other; and to have the covenant of caring for one another. If we are truly co-creators with God, we can also console and comfort one another and know the peace that can

emerge from our reaching out to others. May these five weeks in August be a time of consolation, comfort, and peace for all of us, because all of us are reaching out to one another to console, to comfort, and to make peace.

*Kol Tuv, (All The Best)*

Rabbi Ed