

Parashat Ekev

Seven Weeks of Consolation (I)

By Yitzchak Etshalom

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I

INTRODUCTION

Last week, we began the seven Shabbatot of consolation, known as *Shiv'ah d'Nehemta*, following Tish'ah b'Av and concluding just before Rosh haShanah. What marks these Shabbatot is the public recitation of a special *Haftarah* each week; the seven of them are all thematically related and taken from one section of T'nakh. The common theme which runs throughout all seven is the consolation of the nation in the shadow of the destruction of the *Mikdash* and the exile from Yehudah. All seven *Haftarot* are taken from the latter half of Yeshayah (Isaiah), beginning with chapter 40 (last week's *Haftarah* - "*Nahamu*"). Although much has been made of the possibility of a later prophet - or several - being the author of this second half of Yeshayah (see Ibn Ezra's esoteric comment at Yeshaya 40:1 as well as Abravanel's introduction to his commentary on Yeshayah) we will not explore that dispute in this essay. We will, rather, devote our analysis to understanding the establishment of the *Shiv'ah d'Nehemta*, including the various themes and the prescribed sequence.

In order to treat the subject with the necessary breadth and appropriate depth, we will divide the analysis into two issues. This first half will focus on the development of the practice of reading the *Haftarah* and then segue into an overview of the seven *Haftarot* of consolation and will conclude with a few general questions. In next week's conclusion, we will propose a theory as to the sequence and selection of these passages, demonstrate it with selections from each *Haftarah*, and explain the underlying rationale behind this sequence.

II

THE INSTITUTION OF THE *HAFTARAH*

Although there is little information in Rabbinic literature regarding the historic development of the public reading of the Torah, there is even less regarding the public reading of selections from the prophets at the conclusion of some public Torah readings, referred to as *Haftarah* (more on this sobriquet later). Three things becomes clear from the primary sources:

- 1) The *Haftarah* was instituted after the institution of K'riat haTorah.
- 2) The institution of the *Haftarah* was well-known and universally practiced (although not necessarily at the same occasions as we practice it today) by the early Mishnaic period (1st century CE).
- 3) For the most part, the public recitation of the *Haftarah* did not have a specific text assigned to each occasion; i.e. the *Haftarah* of a given Shabbat was not designated to be a particular passage from the N'vi'im. Even in those cases where the primary Rabbinic sources refer to such an assignation (e.g. the holidays - see BT Megillah 29a), it is clear that there were other customs extant, as prevalent custom does not always follow those dicta.

Haftarah literally means "conclusion", referring to the placement of this reading at the end of the reading of the Torah (some have posited that at some point it was the ending point of the worship service - see Rapaport, Erekh Milin, p. 167 ff. - this approach has little to recommend it and no basis whatsoever in any of the sources). [Some alternate meanings include, curiously, "opening" (as in *Peter Rehem*), meaning that at this point a member of the attending congregation may begin discussing certain matters otherwise forbidden during the K'riat haTorah [L'vush OC #282]. The alternate name found in Rabbinic and Geonic sources, *Ashlamta*, (completion) however, supports the first translation].

As mentioned above, there is little information as to the development of the *Haftarah*; we can't even be too sure as to when the practice was first ordained. That it was established after the institution of the public reading of the Torah is clear from several perspectives, not the least of which is its name, indicating that it was introduced as an "epilog" to the K'riat haTorah. In addition, the Halakhah that the Maftir must first read from the Torah before commencing the selection from the N'vi'im (on account of *K'vod haTorah* - respect for the supremacy of Torah - BT Megillah 23a, MT T'fillah 12:13). The fact that the selection must bear some similarity ("*d'dami lei*" - BT Megillah 29b) to the associated Torah reading further bolsters this notion. There are those who argue that the practice of reading a *Haftarah* pre-dates the canonization of T'nakh (somewhere between the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE).

Before presenting their arguments, one preface is necessary: The essential Halakhah demands that the *Haftarah* be read from a properly written scroll which includes the entire book from which the passage is being read (e.g. Yehoshua, Yeshayah, T'rei 'Asar). The contemporary custom in many congregations to read from a printed book (T'nakh or "*Sefer Haftarot*") is viewed by many Poskim as less than ideal and a concession to the poverty of the Jewish community that cannot afford to have these scrolls commissioned.

Those who claim that the establishment of the *Haftarah* pre-dates canonization (see Elbogen, haT'fillah bYisra'el, p. 132) argue as follows:

1. There is no demand that the *Haftarah* be read from a complete compilation of the N'vi'im, rather from a scroll including just the book in question (e.g. Yehoshua, Yeshayah);

2. *Haftarot* are not read in any sequential order,
3. nor is there a demand for sequential reading within one *Haftarah* - one may skip from section to section (albeit within certain strict parameters).

The conclusion is sound. As mentioned above, it is abundantly clear that the institution of the reading of the *Haftarah* predates the turn of the millenium; it is equally clear from the report in Massechet Shabbat that the Prophetic canon wasn't closed before that time; Rav (3rd century) relates:

In truth, that man, Hananiah son of Hezekiah by name, is to be remembered for blessing: but for him, the Book of Yehezqel would have been excluded from the canon, for its words contradicted the Torah. What did he do? Three hundred barrels of oil were taken up to him and he sat in an upper chamber and reconciled [the contradictions]. (BT Shabbat 13b)

Hananiah b. Hezekiah b. Gurion, the sage in question, lived during the early first century - and issues of inclusion in the canon were still being debated. Thus, Elbogen is correct in stating that the institution of the *Haftarah* predated the closing of the prophetic canon; yet, his arguments fail once we understand the reason for the original establishment of the public reading of a selection of the *N'vi'im*, one that will easily explain the three observations noted above.

III

POSSIBLE MOTIVATIONS FOR THE INSTITUTION OF THE *HAFTARAH*

There are two major schools among the Rishonim as to the origins of the public reading of the *Haftarah*.

One maintains that it was the outgrowth of a more intense learning experience which took place in the synagogue. Here is the report of R. Tzidkiyah b. Avraham haRofe (1230-1300, Italy) in his classic *Shibbolei haLeket* (#44):

[quoting Rashi, who describes the common custom of studying Torah, N'vi'im and oral law immediately after morning T'fillah; evidently this custom was prevalent during the Second Commonwealth]...once poverty increased and the people needed to work, they could not engage so intensely in the study of Torah and they abandoned the Torah in its place save for the recital of Sh'ma which includes the acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Decalogue and the responsibility for fulfilling Mitzvot - this they didn't abandon. Nonetheless, they would read these two verses from the N'vi'im: *uVa l'Tziyyon* and *va'Ani Zot B'riti*...which is a sort of K'riat haTorah - and these are still recited by us every day. On Shabbat and Yom Tov, which have no hindrance from work and are leisurely days, they restored the crown to its former glory, instituting the reading and translating of

the N'vi'im in matters relating to the day. Therefore, we do not recite *uVa l'Tziyyon* in the morning T'fillah of Shabbat and Yom Tov because they have already read from the N'vi'im...(the same explanation can be found in Rashi's name in Sefer haPardes. The explanation proffered here for the recitation of *uVa l'Tziyyon* can be found as early as the Geonic period; cf. Teshuvot haGe'onim Sha'arei Teshuvah #55 and Teshuvot haGe'onim Lik #90. We will not analyze the implications of this approach for understanding the public K'riat haTorah - but it is quite intriguing and somewhat novel).

The other explanation suggested by the Rishonim shares one feature with the first - they both see the *Haftarah* as the result of less-than-ideal circumstances. The Abudraham (R. David Abudraham, 14th c. Spain) explains:

Why do we read from the N'vi'im? Since there was a decree against Yisra'el preventing them from reading from the Torah, corresponding to the seven who would come up to read from the Torah - and no one reads fewer than three verses per *Aliyah* - they ordained that 21 verses from the N'vi'im should be read... (this approach can also be found in Tosafot Yom Tov, Megillah 3:4 - he cites the Sefer haTishbi who maintains that the aforementioned decree was passed by the wicked Antiochus Epiphanes IV).

Note that Abudraham makes no mention of when this decree was promulgated - but, just as the vague mention of the onset of poverty in the first explanation, we must assume that it took place during the Second Commonwealth, likely before the end of the Hasmonean dynasty (37 BCE).

As we noted earlier, Elbogen's arguments in favor of a pre-canon date for the establishment of the *Haftarah* led him to an accurate conclusion. Nonetheless, the arguments themselves are wanting, as follows:

His second and third arguments (the lack of any demand of sequential integrity), are easily dismissed. Since the institution of the *Haftarah* was passed to "make up" for something missing in Torah engagement, it stands to reason that it would not have its own independent scheme of study, rather it would parallel the Torah reading which it was meant to amplify (first explanation) or for which it would substitute (second explanation). This response is, of course, much more persuasive if we accept the Abudraham's explanation; to wit, the weekly (and holiday) *Haftarah* were meant to "make up" for the missed Torah reading. As such there would be no reason to follow some serial or sequential reading instead of an independent reading each week. Although weaker, the same argument might be made for the first explanation. Since the *Haftarah* was intended to serve as a mini-restoration of the glory of studying after T'fillah, there would be no need for it to follow some serial format.

Elbogen's first argument, (since the *Haftarah* need not be read from an entire compilation of N'vi'im, rather it is sufficient to read from a proper scroll which includes that entire Sefer, thus proving that it was instituted before there was a canon of N'vi'im), rests on an assumption without support. His analogy purports to equate the five books of the Torah with the eight books of the N'vi'im (or perhaps he would be satisfied with the four literary N'vi'im and the four historic books of the N'vi'im as units). There is no reason to assume

this equation; the five books of Torah are presented, within the Torah itself, as an integrated unit - Mosheh wrote a Sefer Torah at the end of his life and gave it to the children of Levi (D'varim 31:9). Although the Torah covers a long time period (Creation through the end of the desert wanderings), it was given and completed during one short period and by one Navi - Mosheh. Contradistinctively, each book of the *N'vi'im* is its own work, by its own author (see BT Bava Batra 14b) and focused on its own unique theme and era. Why would there ever be a desideratum to have a scroll of all of the *N'vi'im* from which the reading must originate?

IV

ANALYZING THE ARGUMENTS

Since we have no hard evidence about the time and circumstances which led to the establishment of the public recitation of passages from *N'vi'im*, our only recourse is to investigate the framework of the institution to glean some clues as to its purpose.

As Abudraham points out, the minimum requirement for a reading of the *Haftarah* is 21 verses - although there are exceptions to this rule (generally, if the entire theme is exhausted in fewer than 21 verses). This does seem to suggest a correlation to the Torah reading (7 aliyot times 3 verses at minimum), although, following this logic, there should be a requirement of 18 verses on Yom haKippurim (when there are 6 Aliyot) and 15 for Yom Tov (when there are five). In addition, this does not explain why *Haftarot* are not recited at every occasion of the public reading of the Torah.

The first challenge is easy to defend against: Once the ordinance was established regarding the public reading of the *N'vi'im*, the standard limit of 21 verses was attached to the ordinance and didn't vary from holiday to Shabbat. It is the general rule of Takkanot (ordinances) of Haza"l not to establish varying norms for what is essentially one act.

The second challenge might be defended, if we suggest that a *Haftarah* is read on each occasion of K'riat haTorah that was in practice at the time of the decree. Although this is reasonable, it leaves us with isolating the Torah reading on weekdays, Rosh Chodesh, Purim, Hanukkah and fast days (except for Tish'ah b'Av) in the morning as being the latest stratum of enactment of Torah reading - after the decree and the subsequent ordinance of *Haftarah*. This is difficult, especially in light of the passage in Bava Kama 82b which assigns credit for the weekly readings on Monday and Thursday mornings to none other than Ezra (5th century BCE), who certainly predated the establishment of the *Haftarah*

The Babylonian tradition (which we follow) of the annual cycle of Torah reading has a general principle which supports Abudraham's approach - although it might be marshaled on behalf of the explanation favored within the school of Rashi (as reported in *Shibbolei haLeket* above). That principle, succinctly summarized in two words, is "*d'Dami Lei*" (BT Megillah 29b). To wit, the *Haftarah* must have a thematic resemblance to the associated Torah reading. This would seem to suggest that the *Haftarah* was originally intended to

substitute for the K'riat haTorah and, as such, must communicate the same ideas or relate similar narratives.

The principle which governed the custom of Eretz Yisrael (the triennial cycle), conversely, focused on word-association. Any passage from the N'vi'im which began with the same word with which the associated Torah reading began could be used as the *Haftarah* for that Shabbat. This tradition, as well, supports Abudraham's explanation.

Both, however, could also fit within the scheme suggested by the school of Rashi. If the *Haftarah* was formulated in order to preserve some study of the N'vi'im, it would be reasonable that that study would be related, thematically or (at least) philologically, to the mandated Torah study which precedes it.

One feature of the *Haftarah* which is readily apparent from the two traditions related above - and which quickly emerges from even a casual perusal of the primary sources - is that there were no assigned texts for *Haftarot* at the time of the establishment of the practice. Indeed, the Mishnah makes no mention of designated readings for *Haftarot*; the only related codification is two passages, both from Yehezq'e'l (1 & 16), which are deemed inappropriate to be used for a *Haftarah*. (Megillah 4:10) The Tosefta (Megillah 3:1) does list the appropriate *Haftarot* for the Four Shabbatot (from Shabbat before/on Rosh Chodesh Adar through the Shabbat before/on Rosh Chodesh Nisan). The Gemara (BT Megillah 31a) quotes a Baraita which lists the *Haftarot* for the various holidays, Shabbat Rosh Chodesh and, curiously, Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Av. The Gemara (31b) relates a dispute as to the proper *Haftarah* for Tish'ah b'Av itself; there is very little else discussed in the Gemara relating to specific *Haftarot* and absolutely nothing regarding the assignment of *Haftarot* for "regular" Shabbatot.

This is not to say that the rules regarding the regular *Haftarah* are not found in the Talmud - here are three examples:

One who reads the Torah (i.e. K'riat haTorah) should not read less than three verses and he should not read to the translator more than one verse [at a time]. In a Navi, however, [he may give him] three at a time. If the three verses constitute three separate Parashiot, he must read them [to the translator] one by one. The reader may skip [from place to place] in a Navi but not in the Torah...(Mishnah Megillah 4:4)

He who says the *Haftarah* from the Navi should read not less than twenty-one verses, (BT Megillah 23a)

The reader may not skip from one Navi to another. In the T'rei Asar, he may skip, provided only that he does not skip from the end of the book to the beginning. (ibid. 24a)

As can be seen, there were general rules covering the choice of material ("*d'Dami Lei*" or word-association), the length, the style of reading etc. all of which point to the obvious conclusion that there were no set *Haftarot* during the Talmudic period. To what extent was the selection the "reader's choice" and how much input was given to the community to

determine the appropriate reading is unclear. What is very clear is that, with the exception of the holiday readings, the choice of material for the *Haftarah* was not globally mandated nor made in a universal manner.

This explains why there are so many Shabbatot wherein there are multiple traditions (Russian, German, Yemenite, Italian etc.) as to where to begin and end the text or even which text to use. Evidently, over time, particular *Haftarot* became regional "favorites" and were the norm for a set of communities who shared other traditions, customs and interacted with each other on a regular basis.

...all of which brings us to the seven Shabbatot of consolation.

V

SEVEN SELECTIONS AND FOUR QUESTIONS

As mentioned above, the Gemara provides us with no list of Shabbat-*Haftarot*, and many of the *Haftarot* which we regularly read only became "fixed" in medieval times. The seven *Haftarot* of *Nechamah*, however, are clearly from an early period; this can be seen by their usage as headings in the *P'sikta d'R. Kahana* dating from the 5th century in Eretz Yisra'el. It can also be seen by the universal adoption of these *Haftarot*; there are no communities that do not read these seven *Haftarot* on these seven Shabbatot, using the same texts.

The texts used are all taken from the latter half of the book of Yeshayah, as per this chart:

1	Va'Et'hanan	40:1-26*	26	<i>Nahamu, nahamu 'ami</i>
2	Ekev	49:14-51:3	27	<i>Vatomer Tziyyon</i>
3	R'eh	54:11-55:5	12	<i>'Aniyah So'arah</i>
4	Shof'tim	51:12-52:12	23	<i>Anokhi Anokhi</i>
5	Ki Tetze	54:1-54:10	10	<i>Roni 'Akarah</i>
6	Ki Tavo	60:1-22	22	<i>Kumi Ori</i>
7	(pre-Rosh haShanah)	61:10-63:9**	23	<i>Sos Asis</i>

* the Yemenite tradition adds 40:27 and 41:17 at the end

** the Yemenite tradition begins at v. 9

As can be seen from the chart, the series of seven *Haftarot* recited during this period is uniform throughout Israel, with a nearly-total absence of deviations from community to community. What can also be noted from the chart is that the *Haftarot* are not loyal to the sequence within the book of Yeshayah, nor do they all conform to the minimum of 21 verses.

I would like to raise four questions about this series of *Haftarot*; we will address these questions, along with a brief review of each selection, in next week's issue.

- 1) Why are there *Haftarot* of consolation at all? None of them relates, in any straightforward way, to the Torah reading of the respective Shabbat.
- 2) What is the reason for seven such Shabbatot? If there is a desire for a *Haftarah* of consolation, one should suffice.
- 3) Why does this series continue until the Shabbat just prior to Rosh haShanah? If *Haftarot* can be utilized to establish an emotional/spiritual ambience (as in our case), wouldn't we expect *Haftarot* of introspection and *Teshuvah* to be read during the final days before the Day of Judgment?
- 4) Why do these *Haftarot* violate the sequencing within Sefer Yeshayah? If we want to publicly read seven prophetic selections relating to the consolation of Am Yisrael, we could certainly find seven such passages in contiguous Parashiot - or, failing that, reorder the seven listed above to reflect their position within the book (#1,2,4,5,3,6,7) - all it would take would be taking the *Haftarah* of R'eh and moving it to Parashat Ki Tetze. There must be a wisdom informing the series - what is it?

Parashat R'eh

Seven Shabbatot of Consolation (II)

By Yitzchak Etshalom

I

RECAP

In the previous essay, we presented a limited overview of the theories as to the origin of the public reading of the *Haftarah*, as well as several suggestions and general parameters as to the date of its establishment.

At the end of the shiur, we noted that although the customs of which selections from the N'vi'im would be read was community-based (if that) and it was only in the middle ages that set selections emerged (albeit with variations from community to community). With the exception of the Haftarot for the holidays, all that is provided in the Talmud is a series of rules concerning the size and method of the text - with an allusion as to the guiding principle in choosing a text. The Babylonian custom was to find thematic connections between the K'riat haTorah of that Shabbat and the selected text; the Galilean custom was to identify the first key word in the Torah reading and find a passage in the N'vi'im with the same opening word.

It is, therefore, surprising that the seven Shabbatot immediately following Tish'ah b'Av (of which this is the third) are graced with the universally practiced reading of the "seven Haftarot of consolation", all taken from the latter half of the book of Yeshayah (Isaiah). In last week's essay, we presented a chart of the Haftarot, noting that there is only the slightest variation in customs - there is near-unanimity throughout the Jewish world regarding the selection of texts used on these seven Shabbatot. What is even more remarkable is that the tradition of ignoring the theme (or key words) of the Torah reading in favor of the seven-fold message of Nechamah (consolation) is so global; this means, undoubtedly, that the tradition is an old one, dating back to end of the Talmudic period (note our observation about the Pesikta d'R. Kahanah in last week's essay). We were left with four questions:

1. Why are there *Haftarot* of consolation at all?
2. What is the reason for seven such Shabbatot?
3. Why does this series continue until the Shabbat just prior to Rosh haShanah?
4. Why do these *Haftarot* violate the sequencing within Sefer Yeshayah?

We were left wondering as to the wisdom which informs the sequence, but, beyond that, the establishment of such a custom to begin with, its duration, selection and message.

We will begin by briefly noting two approaches taken by the commentators to explain the sequence - and then reassess the entire institution of Shiva'ah d'Nechemta, using our general analysis as a point of departure for suggesting a third solution to the sequence.

II

MAHZOR VITRI AND ABUDRAHAM

The Mahzor Vitri, one of the oldest commentaries on liturgy in our literature, was composed by a student of Rashi, R. Sh'mayah. He briefly notes that the order of the Haftarot of consolation are similar to the manner of "personal consolers", who bring consolation in stages, beginning with simple and understated comfort and ending in grander visions of solace.

Although this approach has much to recommend it, it is difficult on two counts. First of all, one needs to demonstrate that, indeed, each successive Haftarah contains greater terms of consolation. Second, there are surely other passages which would offer "the next stage" in comfort. For instance, the fifth Haftarah (Roni Akarah), relates the nation coming home - and the next one, (Kumi Ori Ki Va Orekh) has a significantly grander scheme laid out for Am Yisra'el.

Beyond that, the premise is as yet unsubstantiated. Why should it be assumed that the Haftarot of consolation should be patterned after the stages of consolation proffered to a mourner by his or her friends?

R. David Abudraham, who lived in the 14th century in Seville, composed one of the most comprehensive commentaries on T'fillah. In his magnum opus (commonly referred to as "Sefer Abudraham"), he notes that the order of the Haftarot represent a three-way dialogue (I would studiously avoid the use of "polylogue") between G-d, the prophet and Am Yisrael, as follows:

- a) G-d tells the prophet Nachamu Nachamu Ami - bring comfort to My people;
- b) Am Yisrael then declares vaTomer Tziyyon Azavani Hashem - G-d has abandoned me and I am not satisfied with the consolation of the prophet
- c) The prophet then returns to G-d and says Aniyah So'arah Lo Nuchamah - to wit, the impoverished and persecuted nation refuses to be comforted
- d) G-d then responds Anokhi Anokhi Hu Menachemkhem - this it is I, says G-d, who comfort you.
- e) He then continues Roni Akarah, abjuring Am Yisrael to rejoice,
- f) Followed by Kumi Ori, after which
- g) Am Yisrael responds "Sos Asis", - I will, indeed, rejoice in G-d.

This is an interesting observation, but it only goes as far as the opening line in each Haftarah (and it would have worked out so much "cleaner" if the fifth and sixth had involved the prophet and the people, such that each Haftarah was a new voice).

These are the two conventional explanations suggested by the Rishonim for the order of Shabbatot Nechamah.

I'd like to propose a new explanation of the Shabbatot of Nechamah, one which we will discover to have its roots in the approach presented in the Mahzor Vitri. In order to demonstrate the appeal of this suggestion, we need to review - and perhaps reassess - some of our conclusions regarding the inclusion of Eikhah in T'nakh ("canonization").

III

PERSONAL AND NATIONAL MOURNING

In our brief overview of Megillat Eikhah (available on the Mikra homepage – <http://www.torah.org/advanced/mikra>), we raised the question of canonization; what justifies the inclusion of Megillat Eikhah in the T'nakh. Since there were, according to the Rabbinic tradition, myriads of prophets who prophesied on behalf of and concerning Am Yisra'el, the selection of prophetic works worthy of inclusion in the canon was predicated on some message or value that transcends the primary target audience:

Only those prophecies that had eternal significance were preserved. (BT Megillah 14a)

In answering it, we noted that the dramatic development within Eikhah, which reaches its apex at the end of the fourth chapter, is presented as a series of dialogues between the *Meqonen* and the city. The ultimate goal of the *Meqonen* is achieved in the fifth and final chapter, when, in one voice, the people pour out their hearts before G-d, beginning the process of *Qinnamon* (dirge). Besides the direct and eschatological modes in which the text operates on a national scale, the emotional/psychological realities which unfold in the area of dealing with tragedy are most illuminating. We see how the *Meqonen*, who is ultimately charged with getting the city (and her children) to accept what has befallen her and to acknowledge her own culpability cajoles, encourages and pushes the city to cry out to G-d - which is the only path through which consolation can even begin. This is strikingly similar to the process of accepting personal tragedy, wherein denial, anger and hopelessness (read: helplessness) are nearly inevitable prerequisites to the process of healing. In that essay, I suggested that part of the "ongoing value" of Megillat Eikhah is its guidance to the *Menachamim* (consolers) on how to utilize various methods and approaches to bring the mourner to a state of acceptance and back into dialogue with G-d.

There is an additional value to the interplay between personal "fresh" Avelut and that experienced by all members of the nation on an annual basis. All of us learn how to mourn from youth - when a personal tragedy strikes, we have memories upon which to draw which help to anchor us in the rituals and emotions of mourning. When faced with the personal loss of a loved one, all of those feelings which we have learned to internalize on a yearly basis - even if somewhat distant - become part of a more intense feeling. Finally, and perhaps most pointedly, when the formula of consolation "May the Omnipresent One console you among the mourners of Tziyyon and Yerushalayim" is declaimed, the mourner truly understands that he or she is not alone in the experience of mourning, as we are all *Avelim* for Yerushalayim and the Mikdash.

I would like to suggest that much the same can be said for the active process of *Nehemat ha'Am* (the consolation of the nation) which takes place subsequent to Tish'ah b'Av. For all that Eikhah contains the seeds of comfort, it only goes so far as to open up the doors of dirge - comparable to the status of *Mi sheMeto Mutal l'Fanav* (one whose deceased relative is still lying before him, awaiting burial) - Rabbinically referred to as *Aninut*. Thus, there is no real consolation which can take place - as yet - on Tish'ah b'Av (we do beseech that G-d comfort us in the *Nahem* paragraph added in at Minhah, but that is **our** request which remains unfulfilled by the end of the day). The process of national consolation begins after the day (and its 18 hour "trailer", during which time the Beit haMikdash was still ablaze) is over.

IV

PERSONAL AND NATIONAL CONSOLATION

Tish'ah b'Av can never violate the redemptive and other-worldly reality of Shabbat - if need be, it is postponed until Sunday. How can one mourn the terrible distance between the nation and our G-d on a day in which His presence is immanent? (Interested readers are encouraged to pay close attention to the interwoven themes present in L'kha Dodi.) Conversely, consolation belongs primarily to the realm of Shabbat. As such, the process of national consolation begins on the Shabbat following Tish'ah b'Av and continues, each new step introduced on the successive Shabbat. Just as it is the N'vi'im who warned us of impending disaster if we don't mend our ways and repair our relationship with G-d and each other, similarly it is their task to console us and assure us of a speedy and safe return to our Land, to our G-d and to our prior glory.

This process, following the lead laid out above, is also modeled after the stages of interpersonal consolation. Therefore, it should not be surprising that the consolation is presented to us in seven steps - much as the mourner experiences seven days of (the primary level of) Avelut. I will demonstrate that each of the *Haftarot*, in succession, mirrors one of the days (read: stages) in consolation with which the *Menahamim* console the mourner.

V

SHABBAT 1: BURIAL AND KADDISH

What is curious about the first Haftarah (Yeshayah 40:1-26) is that after the first command to the prophet to comfort the people, the theme of consolation - which we would expect to be the leitmotiv in the entire passage - disappears. In its place stands a beautiful testament to G-d's everlasting greatness against which Man's temporary and paltry existence is measured. Here are a few selections from the passage:

1. Comfort my people, comfort them, says your G-d.

2. Speak comfortably to Yerushalayim, and cry to her, that her fighting is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from Hashem's hand double for all her sins...
6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its grace is as the flower of the field;
7. The grass withers, the flower fades; when the breath of Hashem blows upon it; surely the people is like grass...
21. Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
22. It is He who sits upon the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are as grasshoppers; Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in;
23. Who brings princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth as vanity.
24. Scarcely are they planted; scarcely are they sown; scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth; and He merely blows upon them, and they wither, and the stormy wind takes them away as stubble.
25. To whom then will you liken me, that I should be his equal? said the Holy One.
26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who has created these things; Who brings out their host by number, He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power not one is missing.

Wherein lies the consolation here?

Returning to the process of personal mourning and consolation, we see, at least, the template upon which this selection can be seen.

The first day of Avelut is the day of burial - from the completion of burial until the end of the day. As soon as the grave is filled in, the assembled become *Menahamim*, form two lines and, as the mourners pass between them, recite the familiar formula mentioned above. During the burial itself, there are three critical passages which are said:

- 1) El Male Rahamim - acknowledging the death and asking G-d to protect the soul of the deceased;
- 2) Tzidduk haDin - accepting the truth of G-d's judgment (the verses which are included in the Tzidduk haDin extol not only G-d's greatness, but the wispy existence of every man.)
- 3) Kaddish - an expanded version which is said only at graveside (and at the celebration of the conclusion of a book of Talmud - notice again how the rebuilding of Yerushalayim is inextricably tied into the powerful moments of personal mourning).

This is the necessary prerequisite of consolation. Once the mourner has accepted the reality of his tragic loss (El Male), he must realize the "bigger picture" (Kaddish) and even if he cannot internalize it as yet, G-d's greater "view" (Tzidduk haDin), it needs to be stated. Similarly, Yerushalayim will begin to take solace once it realizes in Whose hands its fate rests and that all men wither and blow away as the grass. As the mighty Bavel rested on its ugly laurels, taunting the Levites to "sing to us of the songs of Tziyyon" (T'hillim 137:3),

we remembered that all men have their limited time to crest (see Eikhah 4:21) and that G-d's will is unstoppable.

VI

SHABBAT 2: BEGINNING OF CONSOLATION

One of the overwhelming feelings that the *Avel* feels once the first day - with all of its "reality therapy" - has gone, is that of isolation. After all of the hustle of the burial, the first meal (brought by others) etc., he finally sits alone (even if there are other mourners!), lower than everyone else, silent and desolate. This mirrors the tragic picture of the first chapter of Eikhah - "all of my friends have betrayed me...". The necessary consolation for this step is to show the mourner that he is yet surrounded by friends; if he cannot see it now, he must think back to those glory days of the past and take solace in their memory.

Note how the second Haftarah (49:14-51:3) follows and responds to these sentiments:

- 14: But Tziyyon says, Hashem has forsaken me, and Hashem has forgotten me.
15. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, even they may forget, but I will not forget you.
16. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before me...
18. Lift up your eyes around, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to you. As I live, says Hashem, you shall surely dress yourself with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on you, as a bride does....
- 51:2. Look to Avraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you; for he was only one when I called him, and blessed him, and increased him.
3. For Hashem shall comfort Tziyyon; He will comfort all her ruins; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Hashem; joy and gladness shall be found in there, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Note the unique reference (not found in any of the other Haftarot in this series) to Avraham and Sarah. The father of our people, the archetype of the isolated hero, enjoyed the blessing (realized only generations later) of a tribe more numerous than the stars in the heaven. What powerful solace for the city in mourning - her children will, as promised in v. 18, return to her and adorn her as an ornament. The bright future is, however, presented in broad strokes, utilizing vague terms to paint a glorious picture which is, as yet, unanchored in specific realia.

VII

SHABBAT 3: AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

Although we are generally familiar with 7 days as the primary unit of *Avelut* and that which defines the first stage of mourning, there is a subset of days within the first week:

Three days for weeping and seven for lamenting and thirty [to refrain] from cutting the hair and [donning] pressed clothes (BT Mo'ed Katan 27b)

The third day is the end of the most intense period - that of *B'khiyyah*. Weeping is always associated with the past - with losses and unrecoverable glory. The refocusing on the past at the end of the previous *Haftarah* is the final touch with days gone by - from here on, the emphasis of consolation will be on the future, which begins in the third *Haftarah* (54:11-55:5)

Even the opening line turns the unwillingness of the nation to be comforted into a presentation of a bright future:

54:11. O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires.

12. And I will make your windows of rubies, and your gates of beryl, and all your borders of precious stones.

13. And all your children shall be taught of Hashem; and great shall be the peace of your children.

Attend to the greater specificity here regarding the future - and how the future is not only a restoration but brighter and more glorious than ever (v. 12).

Just as with the conclusion of the three days of weeping, the mourner can start looking ahead and understanding how the future may, indeed, hold days not only unmarred by tears but also be celebrated as never before. This is, of course, only theoretical and cognitively perceived while unintegrated at this point.

VIII

SHABBAT 4: INTERACTION WITH THE CONSOLER

It is often the case that the myriad of visitors during the initial period can overwhelm the mourner; even if the numbers are small, the shock and dissonance brought on by the burial can often prevent real interaction with real comforters. Words float on the air, spoken by ghostly visitors with no real presence (from the perspective of the mourner). The next step, so to speak, is for the comforters to begin the process of personal interaction with the mourner in a "real" way. In addition, the objective anchors and hopes which are presented in the first three days must give way to subjective, personal words of comfort.

After the city has heard the prophecies of grand future, rooted in a glorious past, it is time for G-d to speak directly to the heart of the city. The fourth *Haftarah* (51:12-52:12) introduces this direct and personal consolation:

51:12. I, I myself, am he who comforts you; who are you, that you should be afraid of a man who shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass...

15. And I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea, whose waves roar...

52:5-8. Now therefore, what have I here, says Hashem, that My people is taken away for nothing? ...for they shall see eye to eye, when Hashem returns to Tziyyon.

9. Break forth into joy, sing together, you ruins of Yerushalayim; for Hashem has comforted His people, he has redeemed Yerushalayim.

10. Hashem has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our G-d...

IX

SHABBAT 5: ANTICIPATION OF GREATNESS

Once the personal connection has been established between mourner and consoler, the bright future (which is the ultimate ray of hope for anyone bewailing a tragedy) must be restated. As the first intense week of mourning wears on, as the sharp shock of death and immediate awareness of loss give way to the fears about the empty future and the irreplaceable seat at the table, the closest friends must bring hope to the *Avel*.

The fifth *Haftarah* refocuses attention on the future - but, unlike the second *Haftarah* which was as yet "cognitive" and distant, this *Haftarah* (54:1-10) is designed to bolster the faith that it will, indeed, be good:

1. Sing, O barren, you who did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who did not labor with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says Hashem.

2. Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations; spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes;

3. For you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall possess nations, and make desolate cities to be inhabited...

7. For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercy will I gather you...

10. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says Hashem who has mercy on you.

Note the continued emphasis on the personal connection with G-d - *will I gather you...*

Note also the wife/mother metaphor, stressing the personal and intimate relationship with G-d, as yet undeclared (in the previous passages).

X

SHABBAT 6: RESTORING THE DIGNITY OF THE MOURNER

One of the most powerful feelings, often subconscious but powerful nonetheless, experienced by the mourner is utter powerlessness. This is proper and even encouraged by the Halakhah (the inability to leave the house, to prepare food, to sit up) which enforces the feeling of ultimate impotence we all experience when facing the ugly countenance of death. Important as it is to give voice to this frustration, it is the job of the consolers to begin to empower the mourner.

As the city begins to shake off her dust of desolation and anticipates a bright future promised by her Comforter, she is riddled with the self-doubt brought on by this impossibly powerful blast to her self-esteem.

The response comes in kind in the sixth *Haftarah* (60:1-22):

1. Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of Hashem has risen upon you...
3. And the nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.
4. Lift up your eyes around, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.
5. Then you shall see, and be filled with light, and your heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you...
20. Your sun shall no more go down; nor shall your moon withdraw itself; for Hashem shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.

K'vod Yisra'el is the main feature of this *Haftarah*, not found in any of the others. As the comforters begin to prepare the mourner to arise and rejoin the world - and greet the brighter future as promised, he needs their support to embrace his own glory.

XI

SHABBAT 7: RESTORATION AND GROWTH

Because the mourner has been so reliant on others (for food, for company - even for the quorum necessary to say Kaddish), the main feature of the final day of mourning is the first step of reintegration into the world. Because of the Halakhic dictum *Miq'zat haYom k'Khulo* (part of the day is considered a full day), immediately after Shahrith, the comforters escort the mourner out of his house - as it were, to rejoin the world. One of the salient effects of this reintegration - notably the process by which it is initiated - is the public awareness of this "reborn" citizen in their midst.

Am Yisra'el was never intended to live in a cocoon. Much as this is "a nation that dwells apart", that only refers to a level of spiritual and (perhaps) material self-sufficiency to be found in our nation. Quite the opposite is true, however, when we look at our purpose vis-à-vis the nations of the world. It is quite clear that from the time of Avraham, our purpose has been to "be a blessing unto all the families of the earth" and to inspire, teach and lead the children of Noach to a proper relationship with G-d and with each other.

This can not be accomplished while we are closed within ourselves, trying to decide who we are and what our mission is. It can certainly not be realized while we stagger in the self-doubt brought about by disaster; it is only after we have completed the process of mourning and fully allowed ourselves to be consoled that we can step out into the global community, walk among the nations and inspire them in such a manner that the nations will call us "the Kohanim of Hashem".

The final *Haftarah* (61:10-63:9) focuses on the esteem with which the rest of the world will regard us:

10. I will greatly rejoice in Hashem, my soul shall be joyful in my G-d; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

11. For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so Hashem G-d will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

62:1. For Tziyyon's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Yerushalayim's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth like radiance, and her salvation like a burning torch.

2. And the nations shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of Hashem shall express...

6. I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Yerushalayim, who shall never hold their peace day nor night; you who make mention of Hashem, take no rest.

7. And give him no rest, until he establish, and until he makes Yerushalayim a praise in the earth...

The final step in consolation comes when the whole world recognizes the intimate relationship between G-d and His people; this is when Hashem walks us outside, completing the process of consolation.

XII

STRUCTURES AND PATTERNS, MEANING AND MESSAGES

These past two essays have been devoted to a unique series of Haftarot which has ancient roots and is practiced with near uniformity throughout Am Yisra'el. We raised several questions about the Haftarot, all of which we can answer now:

The Haftarat serve as the "response" to Eikhah; much as the public reading on Tish'ah b'Av expresses the feeling of helplessness so common among mourners, similarly the Haftarat express the stages of consolation which the nation experiences in coming out of that mourning. Just as Tish'ah b'Av cannot take place on Shabbat, a day of redemption and other-worldliness, so Shabbat is the most fitting time for these readings.

There are seven Haftarat to correspond to the seven steps of consolation which the mourner experiences through the help of his fellows. The sequence, though nearly true to the selections from Yeshayah, follows the sense of those stages.

We read these Haftarat until Rosh Hashanah because we cannot properly fulfill our mission on that great Day of Remembrance - declaring G-d's Rule over all - if we are still coping with our own tragic circumstances. There is no better preparation for Rosh haShanah than to remind ourselves of the great mission to which Avraham was called and with which we were charged, our ability to fulfill that mission and G-d's everlasting love for us.

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old.

XIII

POSTSCRIPT

This essay was chiefly written in Yerushalayim (and on various airplanes); before its completion, our city and our heart was torn apart by the horrendous act of terror at Sbarro's in the center of the city. We mourn for the fifteen victims, for their families and for all of Am Yisra'el...and we look to G-d for our consolation.

For Tziyyon's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Yerushalayim's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth like radiance, and her salvation like a burning torch.

August 2001