

HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : כִּי תֵצֵא

This week's Haftorah is taken from Sefer Yeshayohu, Chapter 54, verses 1 — 10.

1. This is the fifth Haftorah in a series which is collectively called, “the Seven Haftoras of Comfort.” These Haftoras started with the Shabbos after Tisha b’Av (called, because of the initial word of that Haftorah, שֶׁבַת נִחְמוּ — “Shabbos of Haftorah ‘Be comforted’”) and continue till the Yommim Tovim starting with Rosh HaShonoh. There is not really any connexion between the Sidras of these weeks and their Haftoras as the theme of these Haftoras is clearly consolation, comfort and reconciliation. If some connexion is perceived, it is more incidental (and rather contrived or even imagined) than intended.
2. We have become so accustomed to the loss of the Beis HaMikdash and our exile and dispersion throughout the world today that we hardly know what we have lost and, especially today, we hardly appreciate the tragedy of our exile and dispersion. But perhaps this imbalance of three weeks of warning to seven weeks of comfort can serve us as some sort of an indication of what we have indeed lost, as follows. The series of three weeks of Haftoras recall the warnings by our Nevi'im of the punishment that would come if we strayed from the Torah. Their warnings were ignored and this annual three weeks of warning ends with Tisha b’Av, which is the anniversary of the Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and our subsequent world-wide dispersion, just as the Nevi'im warned. Sadly, for two thousand years now, this national calamity has not been undone. The Beis HaMikdash is still not rebuilt, the Jewish People are still dispersed over the whole world. Even if, thankfully, there isn't today the horrible persecution as in previous times, and even if we are aware of the quite palpable animosity towards us almost everywhere, nevertheless we have learned to live with this and we are quite used to it. So, if we do not see the calamity, why did our Chachommim see the need for seven weeks of Haftoras of comfort?
3. Perhaps a parable will help us to understand. Two little boys lose their nice colourful piece of paper which they had made into a paper aeroplane. It flew into the open fire and they cry bitterly at their misfortune. Eventually they're comforted — unlike their older brother who, when he hears what happened, is even more upset than his little siblings. When he sees his little brothers quite happily playing and no longer upset, he realizes that they are indeed little children who don't understand what they have lost. For that colourful piece of paper was a £50 note! But then, when the children see their older brother so sad, they too realize, perhaps without quite understanding, that they have lost more than a piece of paper.
4. We today might have come to terms with the lack of a Beis HaMikdash and with our dispersion throughout the world. We might have even come to accept the continual anti-Semitism as an everyday fact of life rather like a person who has had a nagging, incurable toothache for so long that he no longer feels it as it's become part of his life. But let the fact that our Chachommim saw it necessary to have seven Haftoras of consolation be an indication to us of what it is that is missing, so that we can come to HaShem and ask that He should rebuild the Beis HaMikdash and restore us to the great position as His Chosen People as in times past, as He has promised.