

הפטרה לשבת "שובה"  
**HAFTORAH FOR SHABBOS "SHUVOH"**

*Shabbos "Shuvoh" takes its name from the first word of the Haftorah, "Shuvoh" — "Return," that is, the exhortation to us that we should turn away from wrongdoing and return to HaShem in sincere repentance. This earnest plea by the Novvi Hoshe'a is most appropriate as the Haftorah for the Shabbos (usually it is Sidra (וילך) which falls to be between Rosh HaShonnoh and Yom Kippur, that is, between the Day of Judgement and the Day of Atonement. (In those years when Sidra האזינו falls between Rosh HaShonnoh and Yom Kippur, this Haftorah is read for that Shabbos האזינו.)*

*This Haftorah is unusual in that it consists of the words of three different Nevi'im, each selection taken from the Sefer of that Novvi whereas generally a Haftorah is taken from only one Sefer. (This is so as to avoid searching through Sifray NaCH while the congregation simply waits, called טירחא דציבורא.) But seeing as these selections are from the shorter Books of the Nevi'im which altogether make up the one Sefer called "The Twelve," therefore they are all counted as coming from the one Sefer.*

*The opening selection is taken from Sefer Hoshe'a, and the following two selections are from the Seforrim of the Novvi Yoel and the Novvi Michoh. The Readings are as follows: from Hoshe'a, Chapter 14, verses 2 — 10; from Yoel, Chapter 2, verses 11 — 27 and from Michoh, Chapter 7, verses 18 — 20. (Customs vary regarding how many of these three paragraphs are read at all and in what order. Indeed, there are a few congregations whose custom it is to read none of these selections and instead read the Haftorah that is read at Mincha on a public fast day.)*

1. As has been explained in the Introduction to Haftorahs, the Haftorah is sometimes used to bring upcoming events or topical matters to the attention of the communities of world Jewry. Seeing that the season of Rosh HaShonnoh and Yom Kippur is the time for Teshuvah (repentance) therefore the selections which make up the Haftorah of the Shabbos immediately before Yom Kippur are the calls of some of our Nevi'im to do Teshuvah.
2. Some information about the life and times of the Novvi Hoshe'a can be found in our notes to the Haftorah of ויעא and similarly some information about the Novvi Michoh is to be found in our notes to the Haftorah of בלק. The Novvi Yoel ben Pesuel, according to some opinions, was the son of the Novvi Shmuel. (The Gemorroh tells us that when a Novvi is introduced with his father's name, that means that his father too was a prophet. Since we know of no Novvi called Pesuel, these opinions explain that "ben Pesuel" is not so much a name as a title reflecting how the prayers of Shmuel "persuaded G-d" to save the Jewish People from the Philistines.) According to others, Yoel was

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contemporaneous with the Nevi'im Nachum and Chabakkuk and they all prophesied during the reign of Menashe ben Chizkiyohu, king of the Southern Kingdom of Yehudah, in the last century of the first Beis HaMikdash. According to this opinion, Pesuel is not known to us simply because his prophesies were for his times only and as they thus lacked the quality of timelessness, they were not included in Holy Scripture.

3. The message of Hoshe'a with which our Haftorah begins is a clear call to repentance. “Return, Yisroel, to HaShem your G-d!” It's not as if your usual behaviour is sinful: it's not! You have merely stumbled into sin. But if you have fallen, that's no reason to stay down there on the ground and in the dirt. Pick yourself up, dust yourself down — and walk on, back to HaShem! “Give up your alliances with foreigners and don't seek help in strange gods and idols. They will not help you! Return to the ways of HaShem!” The paths of HaShem are straight, says the Novvi. While the righteous walk in them and are happy and fulfilled, yet the wicked walk in those very same paths and they stumble and fall in them! The Novvi declares that it is clearly up to each person how he or she chooses to lead his or her life. Indeed, taking his words as a parable, we can have two people walking along the same path. The righteous person has good intentions and will be rewarded whereas the wicked, walking along the very same path, but because he has evil intentions, he will be punished.
4. The principal topics of Yoel's prophecy are the warning of an impending great calamity followed by his vision of Messianic times. On the surface, the impending great calamity is the coming of swarms of various species of devastating locusts that will wreak havoc and destruction upon Eretz Yisroel. Famine and deprivation will come upon the Land if the people will not repent sincerely and better their ways. The Novvi speaks of great swarms of locusts, “My great army” as HaShem calls them, but he means also the hordes of various peoples who threatened Eretz Yisroel with their invading armies. The only response to the threatened calamity is sincere repentance. Nothing else will help other than a return to HaShem. “Proclaim a fast! says Yoel, “Call an assembly! Cry out to HaShem! Sound the Shofar!” And let the Teshuvah be sincere, says the Novvi. ”Tear your hearts — not your garments! — and return to HaShem for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and exceedingly kind and willing to forgive wrongdoing that is sincerely regretted.” The Novvi portrays the blessing and goodness — material as well as spiritual — that will follow the universal return to HaShem, with the settling of scores for good and for bad.
5. The selection from Sefer Michoh consists of only three Pessukim and focuses on the kindness of HaShem, that He will always accept the genuine penitent. (Incidentally, it is also the central part of the Tashlich Service on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh HaShonnoh, or of the second day if the first day is a Shabbos.) The attributes, or qualities, that Michoh here ascribes to HaShem are an echo of those revealed to Moshe Rabbeinu when he prayed for forgiveness for the Jewish People after the episode of the Golden Calf. This short extract is thus a sort of forerunner and indicator of a main theme of the prayers of the imminent Yom Kippur and so the Haftorah helps to set the scene for the coming great day.