



In this week's haftara we read those oh-so comforting words, NACHAMU, NACHAMU AMI, which offer a crushed people hope of better days (Yeshayahu 40:1). Indeed, we do not wait long before the arrival of TU b'Av of which R. Shimon b. Gamliel declared: "There were no greater days of joy in Israel than 15th Av and Yom Kippur [when]... the daughters of Yerushalayim came out and danced in the vineyards" (Ta'anit 26b).

Now, R. Julius Baker astutely observed that the verse beginning with letter NUN in ASHREI is missing because the NUN associates with the fall of Israel, as is written: NAFLA - 'She is fallen' (Amos 2:2).

Fortunately, David Hamelech promises an uplifting message, as is written in ASHREI: SOMEICH HASHEM L'CHOL HANOFLIM - 'Hashem supports all who fall.'

This inspiring acclamation begins with the letter following NUN, namely, the SAMACH, which is actually composed of the two letters NUN joined together. As if to say that if we become unified, we will overcome the causes of our downfall.

We will compensate for what Midrash Eicha describes as the "double sin" concerning Yerushalayim (unbounded hatred and the lack of blessings on the Torah) and the double punishment (destruction and exile). Moreover, we will be comforted doubly, as is written, "Be comforted, be comforted, my people."

Yes, the 15th letter of the Alef-Bet, the SAMACH, corresponds to 15th Av when all are joined in happiness, when we can once again dance in unity. **MP**