

# Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

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## Moving Forward... to the Past

**Nitzavim-Vayeilech - 23 p'sukim**

**Yeshayahu 61:10-63:9**

This week's haftara, the final one of the seven prophecies of consolation (SHEV D'N'CHEMTA), closes the post-Tish'a b'Av period of comfort that is also designed to repair our relationship with G-d. By doing so, this haftara series of solace and repair has clearly prepared us for the time of T'shuva - the season specifically reserved for our return to the Creator. But this week's haftara selection also effects a powerful response to Moshe Rabbeinu's tragic prediction of the future destruction of our land - as detailed in this week's parsha. For, while the Torah warns of the complete devastation of the land, leaving it desolate with bleak hope for its future, the haftara foresees a time when UL-ARTZEICH LO YEI'AMEIR OD SH'MAMA - "your land will no longer be considered desolate (or deserted). Likewise, as pointed out by Rav Yehuda Shaviv, our parasha describes the time of return with the words V'SHAV HASHEM

ELOKECHA, which our Rabbis (Megila 29.) understand as stating that G-d Himself would suffer in the galut together WITH His nation and, consequently, will return WITH them (V'SHAV) from the exile. Indeed, that very thought is echoed in the closing words of the haftara when the prophet exclaims: B'TZORATAM LO TZAR, "He (Hashem) suffers with them in their pain."

The essential message of this reading, however, is that of the joy of Israel that will experience upon her redemption from galut and, with that, her ability to reestablish of that loving relationship she once had with G-d. SOS ASIS BASHEM - the very opening words of the haftara - reflect the entire theme of Yishayahu's divine message - that Israel will rejoice in G-d as do a bride and groom rejoice in their relationship. The coming geula promises Hashem's protection of a rebuilt Zion and His establishment of the Holy City as a light of justice to the nations. In the first perek of Sefer Yishayahu, one that we read on the Shabbat before Tish'a b'Av, the navi described Yerushalayim as a city filled with crime and corruption, as a dishonest and unprincipled place that had abandoned justice and righteousness. In this week's reading, Yishayahu brings us full circle back to the sinless time when G-d shed His light and His favor upon Israel by promis-

ing that, once again, G-d will "wrap" our nation in righteousness (ME'IL TZ'DAKA Y'ATANI) and Jerusalem would never again be abandoned (IR LO NE'EZAVA).

It is my firm belief that this message of return and repair is a crucial one for this, the Shabbat before Rosh HaShana. As we focus upon self-judgment and self-improvement, we must realize that the glorious future promised by our nevi'im is not one that would arrive through Hashem's "efforts" alone. Certainly, we remember that G-d is a loving Father who wishes to draw us nearer to Him and establish once more the close and devoted relationship that we had with Him in the past. But it is essential that the desired future, those promised prophecies, can be realized only when we return to the basics - and that means not only returning to G-d Himself, but also returning to each other, to every one of our people. The horrors of this past year must teach us that we ARE one and that we NEED each other. And only in that way, can we see our plea to G-d to proclaimed "renew our days as those we once had in the past."

Or, as Megilat Eicha puts it:  
CHADEISH YAMEINU K'KEDEM ✨