

Notes: July 29, 2023

Introduction: Seven Comforting Messages of Isaiah – Parts 1

Last Shabbat, we began a journey that will reveal truths found in Scripture that have always been right before your very eyes. Passages you have read many times, yet the connection of these events and Scriptures were not prevalent or obvious.

I told you that there is a much bigger picture and it is found in Scripture.

Likewise, I made a connection to the Haftarah as well. The Scriptures associated with the Torah readings are significant as well. The Parshah cycle, whose origins are not fully understood, yet provide pieces to a puzzle that was seen by Jewish eyes for centuries, yet not fully understood.

Not only is it found in Scripture, but it is found within the structure of the Parshah cycle, which comprises reading from Torah and the Prophets – Nevi'im.

The origin of the Haftarah reading incorporated with the Torah reading is a series of selections from the books of [Nevi'im](#) ("Prophets") of the [Hebrew Bible](#) (Tanakh) that is publicly read in [synagogue](#) as part of [Jewish religious practice](#). The Haftarah reading follows the [Torah reading](#) on each [Sabbath](#) and on [Jewish festivals](#) and [fast days](#). Typically, the haftarah is thematically linked to the [parasha](#) (Torah portion) that precedes it.

There is an approximate 400 year gap between the last book of the Tanakh written and the events of the New Covenant writings occurring. Within that time frame, even in the historical books such as the Maccabees, there is little mention of this now prominent location found throughout the New Covenant writings. I am speaking of the Synagogue.

Thus there are mysteries that exist to this day, not recorded. The origin of the haftarah reading is lost to history, yet several theories have been proposed to explain its role in Jewish practice. One of the most common views suggests it arose in response to the persecution of the [Jews](#) under [Antiochus Epiphanes](#) which preceded the [Maccabean revolt](#), wherein Torah reading was prohibited.

The [Talmud](#) mentions that a haftarah was read in the presence of Rabbi [Eliezer ben Hyrcanus](#), who lived c.70 CE.

Source – Wikipedia - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haftarah>

There is even validation of the Haftarah being read in the New Covenant writings. One that I will share with you today comes from Acts 13:

Act 13:13 Having set sail from Paphos, Sha'ul and his companions arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. There Yochanan left them and returned to Yerushalayim,

Act 13:14 but the others went on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, and on Shabbat they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Act 13:15 After the reading from the Torah and from the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent them a message, "Brothers, if any of you has a word of exhortation for the people, speak!"

So, at the time of Sha'ul, there was read in the Synagogue a Haftarah portion from the Nev'im in conjunction with the Torah reading for that Shabbat.

We continue this journey with our Parshah from last week, V'etchanan and this week's Parshah Ekev

This week is *Shabbat Nachamu* ("Sabbath of comforting") taking its name from the haftarah from Isaiah in the Book of Isaiah 40:1-26 that speaks of "comforting" the Jewish people for their suffering.

It is the first of seven haftarahs of consolation (comfort received after a loss or disappointment) leading up to the holiday of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. It occurs on the Shabbat following Tisha B'av.

On Tisha B'av we began with Shabbat Chazon, "the vision" and now we are proceeding into the 7 messages of Isaiah that convey comfort to a nation. Yet, this comfort will be more than just the consoling of a nation.

Isa 40:1 "Comfort and keep comforting my people," says your God.

Isa 40:2 "Tell Yerushalayim to take heart; proclaim to her that she has completed her time of service, that her guilt has been paid off, that she has received at the hand of Adonai double for all her sins."

Adonai was casting a vision of how He would not only comfort but redeem His people from their transgression. In this case it was from exile, expelled from their own land as a result of their transgression. Adonai would leave them nor forsake them. He would not make them orphans, but would go, get them, and bring them back.

Through Jeremiah, Adonai provides a reason for double...

Jer 16:18 First, I will pay them back double for their crimes and sins; because they have defiled the land which is mine; they have filled my heritage with the corpses of their horrors and abominations.' "

Israel has defiled the land by ignoring the Shemittah, a time when the land is to rest every seven years and the Yovel, when the land is to also rest in the 50th year. Additionally, Israel inflicted abominations in terms of its idolatry in following other gods.

The reason for their exile is clear, yet, this is not a message that will further amplify their transgression but is in reality a message to comfort...it is a prophetic message of hope. This is a message conveyed as Israel is going through her punishment, conveying that Adonai's chastisement is not permanent, but will end. Jeremiah conveys to us the length of her

punishment...

Jer 29:10 "For here is what Adonai says: 'After Bavel's seventy years are over, I will remember you and fulfill my good promise to you by bringing you back to this place.

Jer 29:11 For I know what plans I have in mind for you,' says Adonai,'plans for well-being, not for bad things; so that you can have hope and a future.

Adonai instructs the Prophet Yeshayahu...

Isa 40:6 A voice says, "Proclaim!" And I answer, "What should I proclaim?" "All humanity is merely grass, all its kindness like wildflowers:

Isa 40:9 You who bring good news to Tziyon, get yourself up on a high mountain; you who bring good news to Yerushalayim, cry out at the top of your voice! Don't be afraid to shout out loud! Say to the cities of Y'hudah, "Here is your God!

Proclaim good news to Tzion – Here is your God!

A nation that has been in exile, because of their sin towards their God, who has removed Himself from their presence, tells the Prophet:

Proclaim good news to Tzion – Here is your God!

This is not only a message to the generation in exile, but to the generations after the exile.

At the time Yeshua went up to speak to the people, proclaiming the Kingdom known as the "Sermon on the Mount"

Mat 5:1 Seeing the crowds, Yeshua walked up the hill. After he sat down, his talmidim came to him,

Mat 5:2 and he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

Mat 5:3 "How blessed are the poor in spirit! for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

While later on, after the Resurrection, Kefa would boldly stand up and proclaim Yeshua as Messiah, the Son of God, whom all authority had been given...

Act 2:14 Then Kefa stood up with the Eleven and raised his voice to address them: "You Judeans, and all of you staying here in Yerushalayim! Let me tell you what this means! Listen carefully to me!

Act 2:22 "Men of Isra'el! Listen to this! Yeshua from Natzeret was a man demonstrated to you to have been from God by the powerful works, miracles and signs that God performed through him in your presence. You yourselves know this.

The message from Adonai through Yeshayahu continues...

Isa 40:10 Here comes Adonai Elohim with power, and his arm will rule for him. Look! His reward is with him, and his recompense is before him.

Isa 40:11 He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering his lambs with his arm, carrying them against his chest, gently leading the mother sheep."

Again a message for the people of the time yet for the generations to follow...

Then the next verses convey the magnitude of God...

Isa 40:12 Who has counted the handfuls of water in the sea, measured off the sky with a ruler, gauged how much dust there is on the earth, weighed the mountains on scales, or the hills in a balance?

Isa 40:13 Who has measured the Spirit of Adonai? Who has been his counselor, instructing him?

Isa 40:14 Whom did he consult, to gain understanding? Who taught him how to judge, taught him what he needed to know, showed him how to discern?

Isa 40:15 The nations are like a drop in a bucket, they count like a grain of dust on the scales. The islands weigh as little as specks of dust.

Isa 40:16 The L'vanon would not suffice for fuel or its animals be enough for burnt offerings.

Isa 40:17 Before him all the nations are like nothing. He regards them as less than nothing.

Isa 40:18 With whom, then, will you compare God? By what standard will you evaluate him?

There is no human standard by which God can be measured.

Yet it is this God, who will be their shepherd, who will feed them and gather them, the one who will ultimately protect them.

There is no mystery on our parts who this shepherd is...

Joh 10:1 "Yes, indeed! I tell you, the person who doesn't enter the sheep-pen through the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber.

Joh 10:2 But the one who goes in through the gate is the sheep's own shepherd.

Joh 10:3 This is the one the gate-keeper admits, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep, each one by name, and leads them out.

Joh 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Joh 10:14 I am the good shepherd; I know my own, and my own know me —
Joh 10:15 just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father — and I lay down my life on behalf of the sheep.

Yet at the time, and as I have said many times, understanding prophecy as you are in the midst of living it, is extremely challenging. I have told you that the expectation of the Prophet was the message being conveyed was for that time, that generation. It was only as prophecies went unfulfilled did the expectation of its fulfillment grow. As more of these prophecies went unfulfilled, the expectation grew even greater, to the point that the question of who would be the one to answer, thus leading to an expectation of a Messiah, an anointed one.

Then we get to verse 21,

Isa 40:21 Don't you know? Don't you hear? Haven't you been told from the start? Don't you understand how the earth is set up?

For the answers to these questions we turn to the Torah portion associated with Isaiah 40...

This Torah portion contains the Sh'ma, the framework of Israel's love for God. As such, divine love is the subject of Isaiah 40. This portion is the first of what will be seven comforting Haftarah readings from Yeshayahu - Isaiah.

In addition to the Sh'ma, Moshe conveys to a new generation the aspects of the Covenant Adonai made with Israel when he brought them out of Egypt. Moshe will prepare this new generation for life in the land that Adonai has promised, ultimately fulfilling a promise made to Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, some 600+ years prior.

In Parashah V'etchanan we begin with Moshe pleading with Adonai and conveying the following:

Deu 3:24 'Adonai Elohim, you have begun to reveal your greatness to your servant, and your strong hand - for what other god is there in heaven or on earth that can do the works and mighty deeds that you do?

Likewise what we are about to see is Adonai revealing His greatness and strong hand to Israel. The instruction is to listen...

Deu 4:1 "Now, Isra'el, listen (Sh'ma) to the laws and rulings I am teaching you, in order to follow them, so that you will live; then you will go in and take possession of the land that Adonai, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

Listen (Sh'ma) to everything that Moshe is going to tell you, so you will live. There is life in the Word of Adonai.

in order to not only take possession of the land but also to live in it...

And a warning...

Deu 4:2 In order to obey the mitzvot of Adonai your God which I am giving you, do not add to what I am saying, and do not subtract from it.

Before that, Moshe reminds them of what they saw and experienced...

Deu 4:3 You saw with your own eyes what Adonai did at Ba`al-P`or, that Adonai destroyed from among you all the men who followed Ba`al-P`or (Numbers 25);

Deu 4:4 but you who stuck with Adonai your God are still alive today, every one of you.

Followed by the foundation for this Covenant, the laws and ruling of Adonai...

Deu 4:5 Look, I have taught you laws and rulings, just as Adonai my God ordered me, so that you can behave accordingly in the land where you are going in order to take possession of it.

And the Godly wisdom they were to follow:

Deu 4:6 Therefore, observe them; and follow them; for then all peoples will see you as having wisdom and understanding. When they hear of all these laws, they will say, 'This great nation is surely a wise and understanding people.'

Deu 4:7 For what great nation is there that has God as close to them as Adonai our God is, whenever we call on him?

Deu 4:8 What great nation is there that has laws and rulings as just as this entire Torah which I am setting before you today?

And that which they have been reminded...

Deu 4:12 Then Adonai spoke to you out of the fire! You heard the sound of words but saw no shape, there was only a voice.

Deu 4:13 He proclaimed his covenant to you, which he ordered you to obey, the Ten Words; and he wrote them on two stone tablets.

Deu 4:14 At that time Adonai ordered me to teach you laws and rulings, so that you would live by them in the land you are entering in order to take possession of it.

And warning...

Deu 4:15 "Therefore, watch out for yourselves! Since you did not see a shape of any kind on the day Adonai spoke to you in Horev from the fire,

Deu 4:16 do not become corrupt and make yourselves a carved image having the shape of any figure - not a representation of a human being, male or female,

Deu 4:17 or a representation of any animal on earth, or a representation of any bird that flies in the air,

Deu 4:18 or a representation of anything that creeps along on the ground, or a representation of any fish in the water below the shoreline.

Deu 4:19 For the same reason, do not look up at the sky, at the sun, moon, stars and

everything in the sky, and be drawn away to worship and serve them; Adonai your God has allotted these to all the peoples under the entire sky.

And additional warning...

Deu 4:23 Watch out for yourselves, so that you won't forget the covenant of Adonai your God, which he made with you, and make yourself a carved image, a representation of anything forbidden to you by Adonai your God.

Deu 4:24 For Adonai your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Warning upon warning. Not just something conveyed in passing but with emphasis. Followed by the potential outcome should Israel not follow Adonai's instructions...

Deu 4:27 Adonai will scatter you among the peoples; and among the nations to which Adonai will lead you away, you will be left few in number.

Deu 4:28 There you will serve gods which are the product of human hands, made of wood and stone, which can't see, hear, eat or smell.

Deu 4:29 However, from there you will seek Adonai your God; and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and being.

And what they would ultimately experience, in spite of their transgressions...

Deu 4:30 In your distress, when all these things have come upon you, in the acharit-hayamim (end of days), you will return to Adonai your God and listen to what he says;

Deu 4:31 for Adonai your God is a merciful God. He will not fail you, destroy you, or forget the covenant with your ancestors which he swore to them.

They are reminded of this special relationship, one that no other people or nation has ever experienced...

Deu 4:33 Did any other people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of a fire, as you have heard, and stay alive?

Deu 4:34 Or has God ever tried to go and take for himself a nation from the very bowels of another nation, by means of ordeals, signs, wonders, war, a mighty hand, an outstretched arm and great terrors — like all that Adonai your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

Further expressing the magnitude of their relationship with Adonai...

Deu 4:36 From heaven he caused you to hear his voice, in order to instruct you; and on earth he caused you to see his great fire; and you heard his very words coming out from the fire.

Deu 4:37 Because he loved your ancestors, chose their descendants after them and brought you out of Egypt with his presence and great power,

Deu 4:38 in order to drive out ahead of you nations greater and stronger than you, so that he could bring you in and give you their land as an inheritance, as is the case today;

Deu 4:39 know today, and establish it in your heart, that Adonai is God in heaven above and on earth below - there is no other.

Drawing the conclusion, given everything that has been expressed, ultimately what is expected of them, what Adonai desires from His people, not a type of bondage or slavery, nothing even remotely similar to being under Egyptian control, but a liberty that is unlike anything they will know, unlike any for of protection and provision they have ever experienced...

Deu 4:40 Therefore, you are to keep his laws and mitzvot which I am giving you today, so that it will go well with you and with your children after you, and so that you will prolong your days in the land Adonai your God is giving you forever."

After expressing what Adonai has instore for His people, expressing the way is through his mitzvot, Moshe continued educating this generation that grew up in the wilderness.

Deu 5:1 Then — Moshe called to all Isra'el and said to them, "Listen (Sh'ma), Isra'el, to the laws and rulings which I am announcing in your hearing today, so that you will learn them and take care to obey them.

Followed by the 10 commandments

Deu 5:32 (5:29) "Therefore you are to be careful to do as Adonai your God has ordered you; you are not to deviate either to the right or the left.

Deu 5:33 (5:30) You are to follow the entire way which Adonai your God has ordered you; so that you will live, things will go well with you, and you will live long in the land you are about to possess.

Deu 6:1 "Now this is the mitzvah, the laws and rulings which Adonai your God ordered me to teach you for you to obey in the land you are crossing over to possess,

Deu 6:2 so that you will fear Adonai your God and observe all his regulations and mitzvot that I am giving you - you, your child and your grandchild - as long as you live, and so that you will have long life.

Deu 6:3 Therefore listen, Isra'el, and take care to obey, so that things will go well with you, and so that you will increase greatly, as Adonai, the God of your ancestors, promised you by giving you a land flowing with milk and honey.

At the beginning of chapter 4, 5, 6, Moshe instructs Israel to listen. Three times it is emphasized to listen. To Sh'ma

Listen and pay attention because you are being prepared for entering the land promised to your forefathers. Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov. They are being instructed on how to live in this land, how to prosper in this land so that they will not perish nor be exiled. Adonai prepares us for our journey and ultimately our destination.

Deu 6:10 "When Adonai your God has brought you into the land he swore to your ancestors Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya`akov that he would give you - cities great and prosperous, which you didn't build;

Deu 6:11 houses full of all sorts of good things, which you didn't fill; water cisterns dug out, which you didn't dig; vineyards and olive trees, which you didn't plant - and you have eaten your fill;

Deu 6:12 then be careful not to forget Adonai, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you lived as slaves.

In other words, do not become complacent now that there is no threat and you are living in Shalom. Yet they are also being prepared to enter the land and take possession of it. Not assimilating with the inhabitants of the land, but expelling them.

Deu 6:17 Observe diligently the mitzvot of Adonai your God, and his instructions and laws which he has given you.

Deu 6:18 You are to do what is right and good in the sight of Adonai, so that things will go well with you, and you will enter and possess the good land Adonai swore to your ancestors,

Deu 6:19 expelling all your enemies ahead of you, as Adonai said.

Yeshayahu is in essence preparing the nation for its return just as Moshe was preparing them for their initial entry.

Deu 7:3 Don't intermarry with them — don't give your daughter to his son, and don't take his daughter for your son.

Deu 7:4 For he will turn your children away from following me in order to serve other gods. If this happens, the anger of Adonai will flare up against you, and he will quickly destroy you.

Deu 7:5 No, treat them this way: break down their altars, smash their standing-stones to pieces, cut down their sacred poles and burn up their carved images completely.

Deu 7:6 For you are a people set apart as holy for Adonai your God. Adonai your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his own unique treasure.

Deu 7:7 Adonai didn't set his heart on you or choose you because you numbered more than any other people - on the contrary, you were the fewest of all peoples.

Deu 7:8 Rather, it was because Adonai loved you, and because he wanted to keep the oath which he had sworn to your ancestors, that Adonai brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from a life of slavery under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Getting back to Isaiah 40 posing a question...

Isa 40:21 Don't you know? Don't you hear? Haven't you been told from the start? Don't you understand how the earth is set up?

The Prophet ultimately answers the question emphasizing the magnitude of who Adonai is. The one who sent them into exile and the one who will bring them back from Exile. There is none other and their return would not happen a moment sooner nor a moment later than what Adonai had already established.

Isa 40:22 He who sits above the circle of the earth — for whom its inhabitants appear like grasshoppers — stretches out the heavens like a curtain, spreads them out like a tent to live in.

Isa 40:23 He reduces princes to nothing, the rulers of the earth to emptiness.

Isa 40:24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely their stem taken root in the ground, when he blows on them, they dry up, and the whirlwind carries them off like straw.

With the final answer of hope and comfort to the nation of Israel found in verses 25 and 26:

Isa 40:25 "With whom, then, will you compare me? With whom am I equal?" asks the Holy One.

Isa 40:26 Turn your eyes to the heavens! See who created these things! He brings out the army of them in sequence, summoning each by name. Through his great might and his massive strength, not one of them is missing.

The answer has been with them all the time, yet they needed to be reminded. If you had paid attention to what I conveyed to Moshe, you would not be in the state you are currently in.

Kefa stood up boldly in Acts 2, remember the reference from before?

Here is how the people responded to the message he conveyed.

Act 2:37 On hearing this, they were stung in their hearts; and they said to Kefa and the other emissaries, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Act 2:38 Kefa answered them, "Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh!"

It is the message of Adonai that is found throughout Scripture and is our means of returning to Him. It all starts here.