



Taken from the final third of the book of Isaiah, the “**Seven of Comfort**” (**Aramaic: שבוע דנהמתא**) that are recited on the Shabbatot between Tisha B’Av and Rosh Hashanah do not relate to the weekly Torah reading. Instead, they powerfully describe the complex workings of the covenant between God, His people, His Land, and humanity as God redeems His people from exile, in Babylon and beyond, to return them to the Land.

## Seven of Comfort #5 (Ki Teitzei): Isaiah 54:1-10

The fourth Haftarah of Comfort moved backwards through Isaiah’s chapters to present a new message and tone than its three predecessors. God took responsibility for His and Israel’s shared exile and suffering, and for ending it by returning with them to Zion in triumphant celebration. God repeatedly aroused them from their stupor to achieve their destined glory.

This fifth Haftarah of Comfort resumes moving forward through Isaiah’s chapters, returning to the text (54:1-10) just preceding the third Haftarah of Comfort which began at 54:11. Isaiah continues to use a family to characterize the unbreakable, tempestuous, and intimate relationship between God (“husband”), Zion (“wife”/“mother”), and Israel (their “children”). The exiled children and their barren, abandoned “mother” are ashamed of their past sins, and fear they will prevent God from redeeming them.

In response, Isaiah declares that God’s mercy for the “first loves”, Zion and His people, is eternal. The renewed covenant will also include eternal peace. Zion and the exiles must therefore forget the sins which caused God to “hide His Face” during their harsh, but brief, exile. Instead, they must burst into song! Zion’s new children will outnumber her earlier ones, and will conquer other nations. They will rebuild Jerusalem and other ruined cities far larger than previously. All humanity will recognize that Israel’s Redeemer is the Creator.

### Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 54:1-3: Zion will rejoice as her children, more numerous than before, return from exile. As occupiers depart and her ruins are rebuilt, Zion must greatly expand for the returnees to live.

Isaiah 54:1	ישעיהו נ"ד:א
“Sing, O barren one who has borne [no child]! Break out into song and rejoice, you who did not travail! For the children of the destroyed wife [present Zion] shall be more numerous than those of the espoused wife [past Zion],” said the Lord.	רנני עקרה לא ילדה פצחתי רנה וצחקלי לא חלה כי ירבבים בני שוממה מבני בעולה אמר ה':

Verses 54:4-5: The exiles are ashamed of their past sins and fear that God will not redeem them. Their loyal husband, God, assures them the opposite is true: humanity will recognize that the Creator redeemed them.

Isaiah 54:4	ישעיהו נ"ד:ד
Fear not, for you shall not be ashamed; be not embarrassed, for you shall not be put to shame. You shall forget the shame of your youth, and no longer remember your widowhood’s disgrace.	אל תיראי כִּי־לֹא תבושי ואל תתקלמי כִּי לֹא תחפירי כִּי בָשַׁת עֲלוּמִיךָ תִשְׁכַּחַי וְחַרְפַּת אֱלֻמְנוּתְךָ לֹא תִזְכְּרִי עוֹד:

Verses 6-8: The Jewish people are God's "first love." Angry at their abandoning Him, God briefly exiled them. But God's eternal love and kindness will cause Him to redeem them.

Isaiah 54:8	ישעיהו נ"ד:ח
"In slight <sup>1</sup> anger, for a moment, I hid My face from you - but with eternal kindness I will have mercy upon you," said your Redeemer, the Lord.	בְּשִׂצְף קָצֵף הִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי רְגַע מִמֶּךָ וּבְחַסְדֵּךָ עוֹלָם רַחֲמֶיךָ אֶמְרָ גְּאֻלְךָ ה'

Verses 9-10: In His Mercy, God swears never again to so harshly punish His people. Like the mountains and His oath after the Flood with Noah, God's covenant of peace is eternal.

Isaiah 54:10	ישעיהו נ"ד:י
"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed- but My [God's] faithful love shall not depart from you, and My covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the Lord, your merciful One.	כִּי הַהָרִים יִמְּוָשׁוּ וְהַגְּבָעוֹת תִּמְוָטְנָה וְחַסְדֵי מֵאֲתָךְ לֹא-יִמְּוָשׁוּ וּבְרִית שְׁלוֹמִי לֹא תִמְּוָט אֶמְרָ מֵרַחֲמֶיךָ ה':

### Connections

"Lekha Dodi", the poem sung at the beginning of Shabbat, verses 3 and 4 of the Haftarah.

Lekha Dodi 7, 9	לְכָה דוּדֵי ז', ט'
(7) <b>Don't be ashamed! Don't be embarrassed!</b> / Why are you depressed? Why are you upset? / In you [Zion], the poor of My people shall be sheltered / The city shall be rebuilt on her hill!	לֹא תִבְשִׂי וְלֹא תִפְלִי / מָה תִשְׁתַּחֲוִי וּמָה תִתְקַמֵּי / בְּךָ יִחְסוּ עֲנֵי עַמִּי / וּבִבְנֹתָה עִיר עַל תְּלָהּ
(9) <b>Spread out to the right and left!</b> / You shall venerate God / Through a descendant of Peretz / Let us rejoice and sing!	יָמִינוּ וְשִׁמְאַל תִּפְרָצֵי / וְאֵת ה' תַּעֲרִיצֵי / עַל יַד אִישׁ בֶּן פְּרָצֵי / וְנִשְׂמְחָה וְנִגְלָהּ

Berurya, wife of the Mishnaic sage, Rabbi Meir, rejected a heretic's interpretation of **the Haftarah's opening verse:**

Berakhot 10a	ברכות י עמוד א
A certain heretic said to Berurya: "It is written, 'Sing, O barren one who has borne [no child]!...' Because she has not given birth, she should rejoice?" She replied to him: "Fool! Go to the verse's end where it is written, '...For the children of the destroyed wife [present Zion] shall be more numerous than those of the espoused wife [past Zion], says the Lord.' [She continued:] "Then what does, 'Sing, O barren one who has borne [no child]!...' mean? [It means:] 'Sing, O Congregation of Israel, which is like a barren woman who did not birth children who are destined for Gehinnom like you [heretics]!"	אָמַר לָהּ הֵהוּא מֵינָא לְבָרוּרָיָא: כְּתִיב "רְנִי עֲקָרָה לֹא יִלְדָה", מִשּׁוּם דְּלֹא יִלְדָה — רְנִי? אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: שְׁטָנָא, שְׁפִיל לְסִיפֵיהּ דְּקָרָא, דְּכְתִיב: "כִּי רַבִּים בְּנֵי שׁוֹמְמָה מִבְּנֵי בְּעוּלָה אָמַר ה'." אֵלָא מֵאֵי "עֲקָרָה לֹא יִלְדָה" — רְנִי כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁדוּמָה לְאַשָׁה עֲקָרָה שְׁלֹא יִלְדָה בְּנִים לְגִיהֵנָם כְּוַתִּיכוּ.

With emendations, all translations are from Sefaria.org. To dedicate, comment, or subscribe, email [haftarahhelper@gmail.com](mailto:haftarahhelper@gmail.com).

<sup>1</sup> שִׂצְף appears only here, where it rhymes with the word following it, קָצֵף. Its meaning and translation are uncertain.