



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 #7 (Nitzavim): Isaiah 61:10-63:9

The final Haftarah of Comfort describes God’s final redemption of His people and city. Humanity will hail this redemption, and the righteousness and sanctity of God’s people. They will clear paths for the exiles’ return home to Zion, God’s new “crown.” God will grant Jerusalem new names, protect her from enemies, and ensure that her residents can sustain themselves and praise Him. Later identified by Talmudic tradition with all enemies of the Jewish people, the nation of Edom is destroyed “personally” by God as He returns from exile to Jerusalem. The Haftarah concludes with Isaiah’s praises for God’s extraordinary benevolence to His people, and God’s promise to eternally lift them up in love.

Together, the Seven Haftarot of Comfort have portrayed how the rocky road from exile’s suffering to redemption’s joy transforms the emotions, thoughts, and actions of Jewish people and humanity, Zion and Jerusalem, Isaiah, and even God. These positive transformations are inspirational heralds for the forthcoming Days of Awe.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verse 61:10-11: Zion and God’s people rejoice that He saved them from their enemies, crowning them among the nations with victory and praise.

Isaiah 61:10	ישעיהו ס"א:י
I will surely rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God. For He has dressed me with garments of salvation, wrapping me with a robe of righteousness- like a bridegroom crowning himself with priestlike glory, and a bride adorned with her jewelry.	שׁוֹשׁ אֲשִׁישׁ בַּה' תִּגַּל נַפְשִׁי בְּאֱלֹהֵי כִי הִלְבִּישׁוּנִי בְּגָדֵי יְשׁוּעָה מֵעֵיל צִדְקָה וְעֲטָנִי בְּחֶתֶם יִכְהֶוּ פֶּאֶר וְכִפְלָה תַעֲבֹדָה כְּלִיהָ:

Verse 62:1-5: God will not rest until He saves and renames Jerusalem. Nations will recognize her righteousness and God’s delight in her. Judah and Jerusalem will be His crown. God and the people will rejoice in them as does a groom upon marrying his bride.

Isaiah 62:1	ישעיהו ס"ב:א
For Zion’s sake I [God] will not be silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be still- until her righteousness goes forth like radiance, and her salvation like a burning torch.	לִמְעַן צִיּוֹן לֹא אֶחְשָׁה וּלְמַעַן יְרוּשָׁלַם לֹא אֶשְׁקוֹט עַד-יֵצֵא כְּנֶגֶד צִדְקָהּ וּישׁוּעָתָהּ כְּלַפִּיד יִבְעֹר:

Verse 62:6-7: Divinely appointed watchmen on Jerusalem’s walls must never be silent. They will speak constantly of God until Jerusalem is praised throughout the world.

Isaiah 62:6	ישעיהו ס"ב:ו
On your walls, Jerusalem, I [God] have appointed watchmen. All day and all night, they shall never be silent. Those who mention the Lord, be not silent!	עַל-חֻמּוֹתַיָּהּ וּירוּשָׁלַם הִפְלַחְתִּי שְׁמָרִים כָּל-הַיּוֹם וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה תָּמִיד לֹא יִחְשׂוּ הַמְזַכְרִים אֶת-ה' אֶל-דַּמִּי לָכֶם:

Verse 62:8-9: God swears that Zion's residents- not her enemies- will consume her produce while praising God, in the Temple and elsewhere.

Isaiah 62:8	ישעיהו ס"ב:ח
The Lord swore by His right hand and by the arm of His strength: "I will never again give your grain as food to your enemies, and foreigners will never drink your wine, for which you toiled."	נִשְׁבַּע ה' בְּיָמֵינוּ וּבְכַרְוֶעַ עֲזָו אִם-אֶתְמוּ אֶת-דִּגְגָנְךָ עוֹד מֵאֲכָלֶיךָ לְאֹיְבֶיךָ וְאִם-יִשְׁתּוּ בְּגֵי-נֹכַר תִּירוּשָׁה אֲשֶׁר יִגְעַת בּוֹ:

Verse 62:10-12: God instructs the world to declare that the time for Zion's redemption has arrived, that they must smooth the exiles' path home, and that God's redeemed people are a holy nation.

Isaiah 62:12	ישעיהו ס"ב:י"ב
[The nations] shall call them, "The people of holiness, the Lord's redeemed ones." You [Zion] shall be called, "Sought out - a city not forsaken."	וְקָרְאוּ לָהֶם עַם-הַקְּדוֹשׁ גְּאוּלַי ה' וְלֵךְ יִקְרָא דְרוּשָׁה עִיר לֹא נִשְׁעָבָה:

Verse 63:1-6: God's enemy, Edom, must be destroyed. Astounded that no nation even tries doing so, God alone bloodily filthies His "garments" while vengefully crushing them like red grapes for wine as He returns to Zion.

Isaiah 63:3	ישעיהו ס"ג:ג
I [God] alone trod the winepress; from the peoples, none was with Me. I trod them in My wrath, and trampled them in My fury. Their blood sprinkled on My garments, and I soiled all My garments.	פְּנִיָּה בְּרַכְתִּי לְבָדִי וּמַעֲמִים אֵי-אִישׁ אִתִּי וְאֶדְרַקֶם בְּאֵפִי וְאֶרְמַסֶם בְּחַמְתִּי וְגַזְנָתֶם עַל-בְּגָדַי וְכָל-מְלִבוּשֵׁי אֲנָאֲלֹתַי:

Verse 63:7-9: Isaiah praises God for all the mercy and kindness He bestowed upon His suffering children. In love, God suffered with them, saving and exalting them at all times.

Isaiah 63:9	ישעיהו ס"ג:ט
In all [the people's] affliction, He was afflicted - the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His pity, He redeemed them. He uplifted them, and carried them forever!	בְּכָל-צָרָתָם (לֵא) [לִו] צָר וּמְלֹאָה פְּנִי' הוֹשִׁיעֵם בְּאֵהָבָתוֹ וּבְחַמְלָתוֹ הוּא גָּאֵלָם וְיִנְשָׂלָם וְיִנְשָׂאֵם כָּל-יְמֵי עוֹלָם:

Connection

The familiar poem, known as "Anim Zemirot", echoes chapter 63's description of God's destruction of Edom.

Shir HaKavod	שיר הכבוד
Bright and red, His garment is red; He trods [the winepress] when coming from Edom.	צַח וְאָדוּם לְלִבוּשׁוֹ אָדוּם, פְּנִיָּה בְּדָרְכּוֹ בָּבוֹא מֵאֲדוּם.

¹ The poem, titled "Shir HaKavod" but popularly known as "Anim Zemirot", is traditionally attributed to Judah the Pious (12th C., Germany), author of "Sefer Hasidim". [Others](#) attribute it to his father, Samuel of Speyer.

The Haftarot of Comfort: Conclusion

Traditional commentaries offer **differing narrative arcs for the seven Haftarot of Comfort**. Rashi's student, **Simchah ben Samuel (France, 12th C)**, states that in weeks 1, 2 & 3, God's "prophets" (i.e., Isaiah) provide small, incremental encouragement to God's destroyed nation. Only then are they ready to receive comfort, which God decisively grants them in week 4. Weeks 5, 6 & 7 no longer reference "comfort" at all, instead concluding the series with great promises:

Machzor Vitry, Tammuz and Av	מחזור ויטרי, תמוז ואב
<p>...The subsequent Haftarot all speak of comfort...in the way that one comforts (a human mourner) slowly in stages. For someone who offers excess comfort to a destroyed person is like one who tells one collecting charity door-to-door, "Tomorrow you will be king!", which he doesn't believe... Therefore [the 1st and 2nd] are "Comfort you," and "Zion shall say" - i.e., although Zion is destroyed, do not say that she is abandoned. Thereafter is [the 3rd] "O afflicted [storm-tossed one who is not comforted]" which, even though it appears later in the book of Isaiah, tradition] placed before [the 4th], "I, I am He who comforts you": Once God has "comforted" her in His kindness, He never again refers to her as "Comforted." Moreover, until this point the prophets comforted her; from here onwards, He comforts her. After she accepted consolation, God grants her many good, great things: [the 5th,] "Sing, O barren one!" [the 6th,] "Arise, shine!", [and the 7th,] "I shall rejoice."</p>	<p>...והאחרונות שכולן נחמה אומ' ... כדרך המנחמים לנחם מעט מעט. שהאומ' לנחרב נחמה יותר מדאי דומה כמי שאומר למחזיר על הפתחים למחר אתה מלך שאינו מאמין... לפיכך נחמו. ותאמר ציון. אע"פ שהיא נחרבת אל תאמר שהיא נעזבת. ואחר כך ענייה. לפיכך הקדימוה לאנכי. אנכי אנכי הוא מנחמכם. מאחר שניחמה הק' בחסדיו שוב אינו קורא לה נוחמה. ועד כאן ניהמוה נביאים. מיכן ואילך הוא מנחמה. ואחר שקיבלה תנחומים פוסק לה כמה טובות וגדולות: רני עקרה. קומי אורי. שוש אשיש</p>

R. David Abudarham (Spain, 14th C.), author of a comprehensive commentary on Jewish liturgy, also notes that the 4th Haftarah is the turning point of the series, which he describes as a seven-part conversation between God, "the prophets" (i.e., Isaiah), and the Jewish people. (1) God asks the prophets to comfort His nation; (2) the nation rejects the prophets; (3) the prophets report their rejection to God; (4, 5 & 6) God directly comforts the nation; (7) the comforted nation rejoices in God:

Abudarham, Order of Parashiot and Haftarot	אבודרהם, סדר הפרשיות והפטרות
<p>The Midrash states...that [Chazal] established the 1st of these Haftarot of Comfort as, "Comfort, comfort My people"- i.e., God tells the prophets to comfort the nation. [The 2nd is] the nation's response: "Zion says, 'The Lord has abandoned me'" - i.e., "I am not assuaged by the prophets' comfort." [The 3rd is], "O afflicted storm-tossed one who is not comforted" - i.e., "the prophets report back to God, "The people is not assuaged by our comforting." To this, God replies [with the 4th,] "I, I am He who comforts you", [the 5th,] "Sing, O barren one who has borne [no child]!", [and the 6th,] "Arise, shine, for your light has come." To these, the people reply [with the 7th,] "I shall surely rejoice in the Lord" - i.e., "Now I have reason to rejoice and celebrate!"</p>	<p>אומר במדרש... כי תקנו לומר בתחלת הפטרות הנחמות נחמו נחמו עמי כלומ' שהקב"ה אמר לנביאים נחמו נחמו עמי. על זה משיבה כנסת ישראל ותאמר ציון עזבני ה' כלומ' איני מתפייסת מנחמת הנביאים... עניה סוערה לא נוחמה כלומ' הנביאים חוזרים ואמרים לפני הקב"ה הנה כנסת ישראל לא נתפייסה בתנחומין שלנו, על זה חוזר הקב"ה ואומר אנכי אנכי הוא מנחמכם ואומר עוד רני עקרה לא ילדה ואומר עוד קומי אורי כי בא אורך. על זה משיבה כנסת ישראל שוש אשיש בה' כלומר עתה יש לי לשוב ולשמוח</p>