



## PROBING THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER  
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

# Indispensable Comfort

### “Shivti b’veit Hashem...”

This week, the month of Eul opened, a month that cries out to Israel to prepare for the Yamim Nora'im with their tefillot that focus on a return to Hashem and to His people. For this reason, we begin to recite the twenty-seventh perek in Tehillim, “L'David: Hashem Ori v'Yish'I” at the end of our tefillot. In that “*kapit*”, David HaMelech bemoans the difficult state in which he finds himself at times, but he always finds that G-d is his support. As a result, he declares that there is but one thing he wishes: **“Shivti b’veit Hashem...”**

Rav Yigal Ariel turns to this week's haftarah (Yishayahu 51-52) whose message echoes the very same need that David expressed in Tehillim.

The earlier messages of comfort prophesied by Yishayahu were descriptions of future victories, successes and accomplishments that Hashem would perform to bring solace and consolation to the bereaved nation. But it was, in fact, “Consolation Through Representation”, comfort through the words of the nevi'im. But in the opening words of this week's haftarah G-d calls out: **“Anochi, Anochi Hu Menachemchem”** – **“It is I Who Comforts You!!!”**

The Abudraham points to the repetition of “Anochi” as G-d's response to the earlier

statement that Israel has no one to comfort them “Ein lah menachem...” [1: 3]. Hashem now responds that there **IS** someone who comforts – **“Anochi, Anochi”** – It is **I, I**, Who comforts you!!! Indeed, Rav Yigal Ariel adds that the original “inconsolable” statement referred only to mortals – but, as G-d declares now – it does not refer to the **IM**mortal One

Consider: after Iyov lost all of his children (and his possessions), his closest supporters attempted to comfort him and rationalize his suffering – but they failed. Yet, in the final chapters of Sefer Iyov, Hashem speaks to the bereaved protagonist from out of the whirlwind and, although He adds very little to what Iyov's friends had said, Iyov states:

לְשִׁמְעֵאֲזָן שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ וְעֵתָהּ עֵינִי רָאִיתִי: עַל־כֵּן אָמַסְתִּי וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עֶפְרַיִם וְיִשְׂרָאֵל:

I heard You with my ears, ..., I therefore recant and am comforted

G-d had given no telling argument nor explanation – so why was Job comforted? Because when he heard G-d's words, when he was drawn close to his Maker, he was comforted!

### “Shivti b’veit Hashem...”

Iyov echoed the very same plea spoken by King David – “I wish only to dwell in Your House” – for being close to HaKadoch Baruch Hu brings comfort, consolation and peace.

And this is the first message that Hashem

shares with us in this week's haftarah.

Our Elul efforts to repent include a self-analysis to evaluate our behavior over the past year: Have we failed to treat our fellows properly, whether through negative speech or harmful actions, or even through heartless disregard of their difficulties; Have we been flippant in our observance of the mitzvot...or have we actually ignored some? Have we shown proper respect to HaKadosh Baruch Hu and His Torah or to the elderly, the poverty-stricken or the ailing? These are the issues we must face during this time – and they are most difficult to tackle.

The navi Yishayahu sends us a message in the words of G-d Himself that will help us contend with - and overcome - these problems. **“ANOCHI, ANOCHI”!** Understanding that Hashem is behind us and, therefore, all we need is **“Shivti b'veit Hashem...”**, a desire, a yearning to dwell in His house, to bring ourselves closer to Him. Knowing that G-d is the essence and source of fundamental consolation for our troubles and worries, realizing that He yearns to be close to you as you yearn to be close to Him, will help us navigate through the difficult challenges of these weeks of repentance.

And how fortunate for us that Chazal gifted us with this haftarah and its crucial Elul message each and every year. We can hear Hashem's message and, like Iyov, we can now: “recant and be comforted”. ■

Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>