



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

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Who Is Hashem Speaking To?

The opening words of this week's Haftarah are among the most familiar in all of Tanach: **נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי יְאִמֵּר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם**, *Comfort, comfort My people,* says your G-d. (Yeshayahu 40:1) Most of us hear these words as Hashem speaking to the Jewish people: *"Be comforted, be comforted."* After the sorrow of Tisha B'Av, that seems exactly right. We have entered the **Shivah D'Nechemta**, the seven Haftarot of consolation, and Hashem begins by offering His people words of comfort.

Yet if we look more carefully at the opening words, it is not at all clear to whom Hashem is speaking. The Malbim invites us to hear these familiar words differently. Commenting on the words, *"Nachamu, Nachamu,"* he writes: **אַתֶּם הַנְּבִיאִים, נַחֲמוּ אֶת עַמִּי**. *You, the prophets — comfort My people.* According to the Malbim, Hashem is not speaking directly to Klal Yisrael. He is speaking to the prophets, charging them to become the bearers of His consolation.

Suddenly, the opening of the Haftarah takes on an entirely new dimension. Rather than saying, *"I will comfort My people,"* Hashem commissions His prophets to comfort them. Perhaps this teaches us that Hashem often chooses to bring His comfort into the world through the words, presence, and kindness of another human being.

The prophets were the first to receive this charge, but they were not the last. Every time we visit a mourner, call a friend who is struggling, offer a listening ear, or quietly sit beside someone in pain, we become Hashem's messengers. His comfort enters the world through people who answer His call.

As we begin the seven weeks that lead us toward Rosh Hashanah, perhaps the journey toward redemption begins not only by receiving Hashem's comfort, but by answering His call to become messengers of His comfort to others.

May we merit to answer that call, bringing hope where there is despair, comfort where there is pain, and in doing so, hasten the day when Hashem's promise of **"נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי"** is fulfilled completely with the redemption of Klal Yisrael. ■

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