



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

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What Does Help Look Like?

YESHAYAHU 40:27 - 41:16

When someone we care about is struggling, how do we know what will help—a word of encouragement, practical assistance, or simply our presence?

In this week's Haftorah, Hashem reassures the Jewish people: *אַל תִּירָא כִּי עִמָּךְ אֲנִי, Do not fear, for I am with you.* He then offers three expressions of support: *אֲמַצְתִּיךָ אֶף עֲזָרְתִּיךָ אֶף תִּמְכְּתִיךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ צָדִיק, I strengthen you, I help you, and I uphold you with My righteous right hand* (Yeshayahu 41:10).

The Malbim explains that each expression adds a dimension. “אמצתך” means giving us the strength to stand on our own against an enemy. “עזרתך” adds active assistance. “תמכתך” describes support that keeps us from falling. His image is striking: a devoted friend holding someone upright with one hand while fighting that person's enemy with the other. Metzudas David explains “אמצתך” as “בדברים טובים ונחומים” - strengthening through good and comforting words.

Together, these explanations can guide the way we can be there for others.

Sometimes a person needs help recognizing the strength already there. A new responsibility or a disappointment can bring self-doubt. A sincere expression of confidence, or a reminder of a challenge already overcome, can restore the courage

to move forward.

Sometimes encouragement needs to become action. A person may know what needs to be done but feels overwhelmed by the burden. Bringing a meal, making a call, or taking care of one responsibility can make the next step possible.

And sometimes a person needs to be upheld. The difficulty cannot be resolved quickly, and there may be no clear next step. We can keep calling, listening, and showing up. Our steady presence can help someone remain standing.

These needs can change, even within the same experience. Someone who welcomed advice yesterday may need quiet companionship today. Giving chizuk begins with listening: What does this person need from me now?

Perhaps that is why Hashem begins with “כי עמך אני” - “I am with you.” Before promising strength, assistance, and support, He assures us of His presence.

We cannot always remove another person's difficulty. But we can offer words that restore courage, hands that ease a burden, and a steady presence that helps a person remain standing. ■

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