

Haftorat Parashat Va'etchanan

Yesha'yahu 40:1-26

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Haftorah of Consolation

This week's *haftorah* is the first of the seven "Haftarot of Consolation," that we read on the *Shabbatot* (Shabbats) between *Tisha b'Av* and Rosh Hashanah. This section from *Yesha'yahu* begins with G-d's refrain to the prophets: "Comfort, oh comfort My people, says your G-d. Speak comfortingly to Yerushalayim, and cry to her, that her period of exile has been fulfilled and that her sins have been forgiven..." (*Yeshaya'hu* 40:1). *Yesha'yahu's* prophecy describes some of the miraculous events that we now see unfolding during the beginning of the Messianic era, such as the return of the exiles to Yerushalayim. We still await the complete solace for Israel described in the *haftorah* together with the revelation of G-d's glory and power.

The Connection Between the Haftorah and the Torah Reading

While the consolation in this week's *haftorah* is appropriate for the Shabbat after *Tisha b'Av*, it also has a hidden connection to *Parashat Va'etchanan* which includes the *Shema* prayer. We have a tradition that the word *Shema* – שְׁמַע is an acronym for the beginning of the last verse of our *haftorah*. The first letters of the Hebrew words "Lift up your eyes on high..." (*Yesha'yahu* 40:26), spell out the word *Shema* – שְׁמַע. The phrase in Hebrew reads "שִׂאפוּ עֵינֵיכֶם מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם" ("Se'u Marom Eineichem"). The continuation of the verse of the *haftorah* is "...and see who created all these..." This goes together with the lesson of the *Shema* prayer – to understand that Hashem is the One and only Creator. When we look around the world we live in, some things make sense to us and some don't. We see so much violence and destruction. However, if we look to Heaven and understand that "Hashem our G-d is One," who causes all events to happen, their higher purpose becomes easier to understand. The *haftorah* tells us to lift our eyes to see the same principle that we are told to hear in the *parashah*. We need to focus both our faculties of hearing and seeing on the oneness of Hashem. When we understand that He is the only power from beginning to end, then our questions are silenced.

A Time for Forgiveness and Consolation

Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel stated, "Israel had no holidays as joyous as *Tu b'Av* and Yom Kippur, when the daughters of Jerusalem would go out and dance in the vineyards" (*Mishnah Ta'anit* 4:8). What is so joyous about *Tu b'Av* and Yom Kippur, that they are considered the happiest days of the

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year? There is nothing more joyous than when we have worked hard to earn our reward. After the nine days of Av which symbolize all the suffering and toil of exile, the prophet promises us forgiveness and redemption through the hidden holiday of *Tub'Av*. On *Tub'Av* the rise of the feminine "Arousal from Below" begins. This holiday opens the period when we work hard to deserve Hashem's forgiveness and reward. The period culminates on Yom Kippur, when we purify ourselves to the highest degree through fasting and prayer. On both days we receive complete forgiveness from our current and past misbehavior, going all the way back to the sin of the spies (*Tub'Av*) and the sin of the Golden Calf (Yom Kippur). On *Tub'Av*, we celebrate, after the nine difficult days, when we worked on submitting our heart to Hashem through mourning the destruction of our Holiness, fasting and lamenting on *Tishab'Av* with ashes. Our mourning and suffering has cleansed us from everything that separates us from un-holiness and the Land of Israel. Our suffering atones for the sin of the spies, who were afraid to conquer the Land of Israel. On both of these holy days, we receive the greatest gift of atonement. Therefore: "No days were as festive to Israel as the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur."

Women Build the Malchut on the Land

Tub'Av is the time when the *malchut* (kingdom) of the *Shechina* (Feminine Indwelling Presence) begins to be revealed. This corresponds to the "Arousal from Below" and our *Inner Lights*, as opposed to the masculine "Arousal from Above" and our *Surrounding Lights*. The feminine *malchut* corresponds to Awe of Heaven and begins the period preparing for the High Holidays (in Hebrew *Yamim Noraim* – Days of Awe) when we crown Hashem King. Likewise the Land of Israel is also known to be the aspect of *malchut*. Therefore, women who are also the embodiment of *malchut* have a special connection with the Land.

Dancing in White Dresses Symbolize Purification of the Vessels for Malchut

We prepare our vessels to hold the *Inner Lights* by crowning Hashem "*King of the whole Land*" with our entire being: Head, heart and liver. (In Hebrew the initials of these three organs **Moach**,- Brain, **Lev**- Heart, **Caved**- Liver spell out the word King –*melech*). This entails working on ourselves in order to integrate the Torah into every fiber of our being. This is a greater level than "*Surrounding Lights*," which correspond, for example, to hearing an inspiring lecture without being able to give it over. Rabbi Refael Luria explains that the daughters go out in white dresses on *Tub'Av*, to indicate the beginning of the period for preparing the "*Inner Lights*" – the vessels and the garments, which must be white and pure, worthy for the Divine to dwelling. The circle dance in the vineyards creates the vessel for the *Inner Lights*, to become a vineyard of G-d. The vineyard also alludes to the *Inner Lights*, as the vine is found inside of the grapes.

Tub'Av: Tikun (Rectification) of the Inner Lights through Creative Expression

According to the religious practice of modesty (*tzniut*), today it is unacceptable for young women go out to dance in the vineyards, while young men watch, and choose whoever pleases them most. Therefore, our work is to tune into the inner quality of the women's circle dance by rectifying our *Inner Lights* by connecting with the land in tree-planting and praising Hashem through creative expression. Expressing our creative potential is the feminine mode of serving Hashem which will ultimately herald the *geula*. It requires getting in touch with the inner spark of the *Shechina* buried deeply within each of us and giving birth to it through our personal artistic expression in music, art,



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poetry, dance etc. Through expressing our creativity we integrate our Torah and become a channel for Hashem's *Shechina* to shine through us.

The Inner Lights of Tub'Av & Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin

At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, women work together side by side, day after day, sharing insights, dreams and visions. We develop our intuitive femininity, learning from mothers, caretakers, visionaries, peacekeepers, teachers, guides, healers, and mediators. We strive to become wise and loving women knowing that our fundamental task is to maintain harmony and balance within our homes, community and the larger world. Through rectification of our *Inner Lights* we can engender spiritual transformation, and radiate the subtle power of "*The honor of the King's daughter is within*" (*Tehillim* 45:14). "*In the merit of the righteous women*" and with G-d's help, we will merit the building of the Divine Home and the complete redemption speedily!

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.



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If you are interested in:

*Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in *Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha*, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>*

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin – Holistic Torah Study for Women on the Land of Israel

At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

Come Learn With Us!

Beginner and advanced levels are offered for women of all ages and religious backgrounds. Whether your interest in Judaism has recently been ignited, or you are seeking a wider perspective, Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin offers the opportunity to improve your learning skills while strengthening your commitment to Judaism within the parameters of Halachah – all while engaging your inner creative spirituality, working the Land, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Support Our School!

You have the unique opportunity to help us continue to build and amplify the light of Torah on the Land of Israel. With your help we can increase our ability to provide women an extraordinary Torah environment where they can build a solid Jewish foundation which will have an impact for generations to come.



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