

# Haftarah Helper 5781: Shabbat Shuva (Sephardim)

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## Hosea 14:2-10, Micah 7:18,20

Always read on Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, this Haftarah calls for repentance and shows its practical effects. This Shabbat is named “Shabbat Shuva” after its Haftarah’s opening word:

Hosea 14:2	הושע י"ד:ב
<b>Return</b> , O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity.	שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בְּעֹנֶךָ:

After this chastisement, Hosea goes on to make the case for repentance. Unusually (see “Haftarah Halakhah”, below), the Haftarah continues with words from a second prophet, Micah. He affirms that God will, in fact, receive this repentance and forgive them, due to His covenant with them and their forefathers.

### Haftarah Breakdown

**Hosea**, verses 14:2-4: If His people return from their ways...

Hosea 14:3	הושע י"ד:ג
Take words with yourselves and return to the Lord. Say to Him: “Forgive all guilt And accept what is good, and let us render [for] bulls [the offering of] our lips...”	קָחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל־ה' אֱמַרוּ אֵלָיו כָּל־תִּשְׂאָ עוֹן וְקַח־טוֹב וְנִשְׁלַמָּה פְּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ:

**Verses 14:5-8:...** God will reward them and those who cleave to them.

Hosea 14:6	הושע י"ד:ו
I will be like dew to Israel, they shall blossom like a rose; it shall strike its roots like Lebanon.	אֶהְיֶה כְּטֵל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִפְרַח כְּשׁוֹשַׁנָּה וְיֶרֶךְ שְׂרָשֵׁיו כְּלִבְנוֹן:

**Verses 14:9-10: Israel will no longer associate with idols, but rather with God.**

Hosea 14:9	הושע י"ד:ט
Ephraim [shall say,] “What more have I to do with idols?” [God shall say,] “I will answer him and look upon Him [saying]: ‘I am like a leafy cypress tree; from Me your fruit is found.’”	אֶפְרַיִם מֵה־לִּי עוֹד לְעַצְבִּים אֲנִי עֲנִיתִי וְאֲשִׁיר־נו אֲנִי כְּבְרוֹשׁ רָעֵנָן מִמֶּנִּי פְּרִיךָ נִמְצָא:

**Micah**, verses 7:18,20: God will keep his covenant, and maintain the Jewish people.

Micah 7:18	מיכה ז:י"ח
Who is a God like You, Who forgives sin and passes over transgression for the remnant of His heritage? He does not maintain His anger forever, for He desires lovingkindness.	מִי־קֵל כָּמוֹךָ נְשָׂא עוֹן וְעֵבֵר עַל־פְּשָׁע לְשִׂאֲרֵית נִחַלְתּוֹ לֹא־הִחְזִיק לְעַד אִפּוֹ כִּי־חָפֵץ חַסְדֵּךָ הוּא:

## Haftarah Halakhah

Each Haftarah must be from a single prophetic book except among the twelve “minor” prophets, as they constitute one book, according to the Talmud:

Megillah 24a	מגילה כ"ד עמוד א
It is taught in a Baraita: One may not skip from [the book of one] prophet to [another] prophet. [However,] one may skip amongst the twelve books of Prophets provided that one does not skip from the book's end to its beginning.	תניא איך אין מדלגין מנביא לנביא ובנביא של שנים עשר מדלג ובלבד שלא ידלג מסוף הספר לתחילתו:

### Connections

Reish Lakish bases astonishing statements about the **power of repentance** upon the Haftarah's first verse:

Yoma 86b	יומא פ"ו עמוד ב
<p>Reish Lakish said: “Great is repentance, as [one's] intentional sins are counted for him <i>as unwitting transgressions</i>, as [Hosea 14:2] states: ‘Return, Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity’ [...]</p> <p>[The Gemara asks:] But didn't Reish Lakish say: “Great is repentance, as one's intentional sins are counted for him <i>as merits</i>, as [Ezekiel 33:19] stated: ‘And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does justice and righteousness he shall live?’”</p> <p>[The Gemara reconciles:] This is not difficult: Here when one repents out of love, [his sins become merits]; there when one repents out of fear, [his sins become unwitting transgressions.]</p>	<p>אמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות שנאמר (הושע יד, ב) שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך כי כשלת בעונך ... והאמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכיות שנאמר (יחזקאל לג, יט) ובשוב רשע מרשעתו ועשה משפט וצדקה עליהם (חיה) יחיה לא קשיא כאן מאהבה כאן מיראה</p>

Another sage, Rava, makes a similar point about **those who forgive others**:

Rosh Hashanah 17a	ראש השנה י"ז עמוד א
Rava said: “Whoever forgoes his reckonings with others, [God] forgoes punishment for all his sins, as [Micah 7:18] states: “He bears sin and forgives transgression”. Whose sins does He bear? The sins of one who forgives sins [done to him].	רבא אמר כל המעביר על מדותיו מעבירין לו על כל פשעיו שנאמר נושא עון ועובר על פשע למי נושא עון למי שעובר על פשע

Hosea 14:3 is a basis for establishing **prayer as a substitute for the Temple service**:

Sefer HaChinukh 185	ספר החינוך קפ"ה
This commandment [of the Yom Kippur service] is practiced at the time of the [Temple]. Now that, due to our iniquities, we have neither Temple nor high priest, neither [priestly] garments nor sacrifices, all of Israel nowadays are accustomed to serve [God] through prayers and supplications as [Hosea 14:3] states, "Let us render [for] bulls [offered in the Temple], [the offering of] our lips."	ונוהגת כל מצוה זו בזמן הבית. ועכשיו בעונותינו שאין לנו לא מקדש ולא כהן גדול ולא בגדי שרד ולא קרבנות, נהגו כל ישראל לעבד ביום זה בתפלות ובתחנונים, וכמו שכתוב (הושע יד ג) 'ונשלמה פרים שפתינו'.

With emendations, biblical translations are by Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg and other translations are from Sefaria.org.

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