

Dvar Torah Shabbos Nachamu

Why is this Shabbat– Shabbos Nachamu– traditionally considered a Singles’ Shabbat?

The Haftarah for this week is Isaiah 40, one of the most beautiful chapters of the whole Tanakh. This beautiful chapter is the switch to what scholars call DeuteroIsaiah... a completely different text... with a focus on hope and comfort, or consolation, as the opening line suggests. Nachamu, nachamu Ami... such a powerful line. Be comforted be comforted my nation...

This chapter gets its very own Shabbat named after it— Shabbat Nachamu. It’s one of the very few Shabbatot of the year that is named for its Haftarah, and it’s often celebrated as a singles weekend. If you look around for religious singles weekends, I guarantee you will find a LOT of them on Shabbos Nachamu.

What is the connection between Shabbos Nachamu and singles?

Of course, the date of Shabbat Nachamu falls right around the 15th of Av, the Jewish Valentine’s Day, Tu B’Av. The mishnah tells that the daughters of Israel would go dancing in the fields looking for men, and today, in modern Israel and around the world, the day is celebrated as a day of love. It makes sense that many singles would connect around Tu B’Av.

Also, the Torah portion of Shabbos Nachamu is always Va’etchanan, containing the Shma and the V’Ahavta paragraph...the highest affirmation of God’s love for us. The Ten Commandments, which in the rabbinic imagination, are our marriage contract, our ketubah, with God, are ALSO in Parshat Va’Etchanan.

There are a LOT of connections with love and finding a partner.

But our chapter today might provide a particularly powerful level of hope and comfort, especially for a reader who might feel like it’s been a long haul to find a partner. Look at the first few verses of chapter 40. Isaiah is speaking to the people... Be comforted... Malah Tzevah, Let Jerusalem know that her term of service is over

Tisha B’Av, the saddest time of our year, and any personal mourning we may be feeling... is OVER. Have been going through hardship? It’s time to be comforted and to have hope again.

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is God from of old, Creator of the earth from end to end, He never grows faint or weary, His wisdom cannot be fathomed

29 He gives strength to the weary, Fresh vigor to the spent.

30 Youths may grow faint and weary, And young men stumble and fall;

31 But they who trust in the LORD shall renew their strength As eagles grow new plumes:

What a perfect message for a singles' weekend!! Never give up hope... God will renew your strength as eagles grow new plumes.

Winston Churchill said: Success is stumbling from failure to failure without a loss of enthusiasm. In a way, Isaiah was wishing that for all of us: singles, married, people who have been through hard times, well, EVERYONE really. ...do not give up... there is always renewed strength...Shabbos Nachumu is not just for singles...but for anyone who is struggling... its okay to be human and to go through hard times, but it's enough for now. There is fresh vigor and renewed energy around the corner. We can breathe easy.. And we can be inspired to keep moving forward, no matter how spent we may feel.