HAFTarah, Day 2. The Haftarah expands the theme of redemption begun in our Torah reading, when Isaac was not sacrificed because of God's saving hand. Jeremiah prophesied that God would bring the people back from exile and comfort them, emphasizing not exile but redemption. Thus, the Haftarah asks us to understand the Torah portion not from Abraham's original perspective but backward, from the point of view of the saving moment at the story's end. Similarly, Jeremiah focuses on the theme of God's saving or redeeming, as he speaks to the people Israel, now in exile. These so-called “ten lost tribes,” collectively referred to as “Ephraim,” were exiled by Assyria in the 8th century B.C.E. (well before Jeremiah was born), but the prophet promises that they will return.

VERSE 3. ETERNAL LOVE I CONCEIVED FOR YOU THEN (אנאבת עליך אישmó). In the mystical tradition, Isaac is seen as the one who has awe of God (vir-at ha-shem). Indeed, many may experience the Torah reading for this day as conveying awe and fear. The Haftarah emphasizes the opposite, the love of God (ahavat ha-shem). Indeed, much of the imagery in these verses is of marriage: the wedding of God and Israel. Jeremiah idealizes the time of wandering in the desert as a moment when God and Israel were alone with each other, in love.
VERSE 8. FROM THE NORTHLAND. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.E. and deported much of the populace. Some 97 years later, Assyria was itself conquered by Babylonia, in 625 B.C.E.

Preaching around this time, Jeremiah does not name the country of exile but uses the less specific term, "northern lands," which can mean either Assyria or Babylonia.
ROSH HASHANAH AND
THE MESSAGE OF THE
HAFTARAH. The first verse
of the Haftarah themati-
cally connects this Haftarah
reading to the Akedah.
Every year “the people es-
cape from the sword,” just
as every year Isaac escapes
the knife. The end of the
Haftarah strikes another
note: the message of rep-
entance. No matter what
our misdeeds, no matter
the nature of our mistakes,
God will receive us back if
we are truly contrite, and
if we choose to return to
God. Indeed, the prophet
uses some of the most
loving language to describe
the wayward sinner who
regrets what has been done
and is welcomed back to
the fold. In this Haftarah, as
in the prophetic readings
for the first day of Rosh
Hashanah, a woman serves
as a source of national
redemption. First we read
of Hannah, the mother of
Samuel, who guided the
Jewish people from anarchy
to monarchy; and now of
Rachel, whose weeping
moved God to return her
people to their land.