

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Va'etchanan, 5778
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
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 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shgalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
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 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shgalov

DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shgalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Va'eschanan

COMFORT FOR THE FIRST, COMFORT FOR THE SECOND

The Haftorah after Tisha B'Av is always Nachamu, Nachamu – Comfort, Comfort. The doubled expression refers to the first Two Temples. As each possessed an advantage over the other, the Jewish people needed to be comforted for the destruction of each. These represent two forms of Divine service: actions inspired from Above, and actions inspired from within. In the times of the First Temple, the Jewish people were like tzaddikim; in the times of the Second Temple, they were like baalei teshuvah. This parallels the two times the Ten Commandments were given. The times of the Third Temple will have the advantages of both.

A section from the Prophets – the Haftorah – is read each week following the Torah reading. The prophetic selection is based on the content of the weekly Torah reading. For example, the first Torah reading is *Bereishis* – the first section of Genesis which describes creation. The Haftorah for that week is from Isaiah, chapter 42, which begins, “Thus says G-d, the L-rd who created the heavens . . . who spread forth the earth.”

This general rule holds true until the 17th of Tammuz. From that date, which falls sometime in mid-summer, until Rosh Hashanah, the Haftorah is based on historical events. From the 17th of Tammuz until Tisha B'Av – the ninth of Av – the Haftorahs concern punishment and the impending destruction of the Temple. After Tisha B'av until Rosh Hashanah – a period of seven weeks – the Haftorahs offer comfort and consolation to the Jewish people, predicting the future rebuilding of the Temple, the coming of Moshiach.

Nevertheless, each of these special Haftorahs, connected as they are to the historical theme of consolation and Redemption, occurs on a specific Shabbos. The Torah reading for the Shabbos after Tisha B'av is always Va'eschanan – the second portion of the book of Deuteronomy. The Haftorah for the first Shabbos after Tisha B'av is always *Nachamu* – the prophecy of consolation from Isaiah, chapter 40. Therefore, it seems obvious that there must also be a connection between the weekly Torah reading – Va'eschanan – and the Haftorah – *Nachamu*.

The Haftorah begins with the words, "*Nachamu, Nachamu Ami*" – "Comfort, Comfort, My people, says your G-d." In this moving prophecy, G-d offers consolation to the Jewish people for the destruction of the Temple.

Why is the word "*nachamu*" – "comfort" – doubled? The Midrash offers the following explanation: the verse begins "*Nachamu, nachamu*" – comfort, comfort – because of the two Temples. The first "*nachamu*" is for the first Temple, and the word is repeated to provide comfort for the destruction of the second Temple.

However, this doesn't seem to quite fit with the idea of providing comfort. If an individual suffers two losses, one greater than the other, the comfort for the greater loss naturally includes and provides comfort for the lesser. For example, if someone loses a car, replaces it, and then loses the second car, to comfort that person, you only have to restore one car, the nicer and more expensive of the two.

In our situation, the comfort is an assurance that there will be a Third Temple, that of Moshiach, which will never be destroyed. This is the comfort for the destruction of the first Temple. Since the second Temple was inferior to the first, any comfort offered for the destruction of the first Temple will automatically include comfort for the destruction of the second. That is, once the prophet says,

Nachamu – be comforted, for there will be consolation for the great loss of the first Temple, in the times of Moshiach when the third, permanent Temple will be built – there is no need for a second *Nachamu* – be comforted for the smaller loss of the second Temple. The comfort offered for the first Temple includes consolation for the second.

The second Temple lacked five things found in the first: the ark of the covenant, the heavenly fire on the altar, the Divine Presence, Divine Inspiration, and the Urim and Tumim – the prophetic part of the high priest’s garments. These, of course, are largely spiritual in nature.

Nevertheless, the second Temple had two advantages over the first: it was greater in size and in years. The second Temple was bigger and lasted longer than the first. It had a physical superiority. There is thus a need to offer comfort for that which existed in the second Temple, but not the first.

Therefore, the prophet said, “*Nachamu, Nachamu,*” – “Comfort, Comfort.” In the Third Temple, both the spiritual advantages of the first Temple and the physical superiority of the second will be restored.

Each of the Temples represent a different approach in the way human activity – a Jew’s performance of mitzvot – refines and purifies creation. In the first approach, an individual possesses the ability to elevate himself and his environment because there has been an illumination from above. For example, a teacher can instruct a student in such a way that he will be able to learn on his own afterwards. Still, he possesses that ability to learn because of the way he was taught; his future learning depends on his inspiration from the teacher.

The second approach comes from an inner illumination, so to speak. The individual is motivated not from above, but from within.

For example, *teshuvah* – repentance – results from the innate nature of a Jew. An individual who has sinned has distanced himself from G-d and cannot receive a revelation of Divine Light. But, because the essence of a Jew is part of the essence of G-d, he inherently wants to fulfill G-d's will, and so is instinctively compelled to do *teshuvah* – to return to G-d, perform the mitzvot, transform his sins into merits, and so elevate the world.

During the time of the first Temple, the Jewish people were in the category of *tzaddikim* – righteous individuals – and so followed the first approach. The Divine Presence dwelled in the Temple and Divine inspiration was clearly manifest and readily acknowledged. The Light of G-dliness filled the land, preparing the people to observe the commandments through *kabbalos ol malchus shamayim* – acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. The people – more directly connected to the Divine Light – were vessels for G-dliness. The first Temple's higher level of holiness reflected this.

During the time of the second Temple, the Jewish people were in the category of *baalei teshuvah* – individuals who had sinned and returned. The transgressions of the people caused the destruction of the first Temple. These same transgressions broke their connection with the Light of G-dliness. Indeed, a transgression, a violation of a commandment, is the total opposite of *kabbalos ol* – the contrary to a complete submission to the Will of G-d.

In order to re-establish their connection with the Divine Light, the Jewish people had to act on their own, so to speak. They could not rely on Divine inspiration, for they had broken that channel. They had to do *teshuvah*. And when the Jewish people did do *teshuvah*, they were able to elevate not just themselves, but also their environment. This elevation included their transgressions. Through the *teshuvah* of the Jewish people, even deliberate sins were transformed into merits. Through *teshuvah*, the physical, with all its

imperfections, became permanently imbued with the spiritual. The second Temple's greater size and duration reflected this.

The Third Temple will contain both advantages: the Jewish people will be vessels for and directly receive the Light of G-dliness and the world will be elevated, permanently infused with holiness. Both aspects of the Jewish people, that of the *tzaddik* – the righteous individual – and the baal *teshuvah* – the one who has sinned and returned – will be openly revealed.

This difference is reflected in the Torah itself. The first time the Ten Commandments were given, the Jewish people were like *tzaddikim*. Indeed, the Tablets were made by G-d Himself. The second time the Ten Commandments were given – after the sin of the Golden Calf, when the first tablets were broken – as the first Temple was broken – the people were like baalei *teshuvah*. Then Moses made the tablets. But with the second Tablets came also the traditions, explanations and laws that have defined Judaism for the past three thousand plus years.

The first time the Ten Commandments were given parallels the period of the first Temple, and the second time the second Temple.

And now we can understand as well the connection between the Haftorah – *Nachamu, Nachamu* – Comfort, Comfort – and the Torah reading of Va'eschanan. For the Ten Commandments are recorded for the second time in the portion of Va'eschanan.

The Ten Commandments recorded in the book of Exodus were said before the sin of the calf, when the Jews were in the category of *tzaddikim*. In the portion of Va'eschanan, the Ten Commandments are said not only after the sin of the calf, but also after all the other sins and transgressions that occurred during the forty years in the wilderness.

In fact, this Torah reading begins as a continuation of the rebuke of the previous one.

Nevertheless, the entire story of the giving of the Torah, just as it was before the sin, is retold in the portion of Va'eschanan. Precisely in Va'eschanan is the unity of both aspects of the Jewish people revealed. In this Torah reading, the people are both *tzaddikim* – the Ten Commandments are given again as they had been before any transgression – and *baalei teshuvah* – the Ten Commandments are given after the *teshuvah* for all the transgressions.

Similarly, the opening words of the Haftorah indicates the unity of the first Temple and the second Temple. *Nachamu* – Comfort – for the first Temple; *Bachamu* – Comfort – for the second Temple.

When will the inner unity of the Jewish people be revealed? When will the advantages of both Temples be combined? When the Third Temple is built, with the coming of Moshiach, imminently and immediately.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 9, pp. 61-70)

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