

Va'etchanan: Shabbat Nachamu and the Disengagement

- Nisson Shulman.

What consolation can we take at this bitter time, on the Shabbat Nahamu? There are some silver linings, like the sorrow of the soldiers and police, like the underlining recognition that we are, after all one people, like the admiration of many newsmen. But the sadness prevails. Yet there is a story in the sequence of the haftorah's after Tisha B'Av that can also give some measure of solace, in the comfort that comes from the Almighty Himself - the promise of Geulah Shelema, may it soon come to pass.

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“Nahamu, Nahamu Ami, yomar Elokeichem” (Yeshayahu 40:1). “Take comfort, my people”. Where shall we take comfort in such a difficult, soul-searing week, when we see and feel the tragedy of families wrenched from their homes, and required after generations to start again? Or where we see the real anguish of soldiers required to move them, pleading with them, weeping with them, feeling their own suffering?

Perhaps that is where we can take a measure of consolation. The very anguish of the soldiers and police, the sorrow of the entire nation, even those who were and are for disengagement, demonstrates that with all our divisions and political animosities, with all the ideological fights we have engaged in on every side of many issues during the past years, we are at bottom one people, feeling with each other, suffering with each other, even praying together at times of crisis, and seeking to assuage the pain in some way, however we can. There is in that, a measure of comfort, and perhaps that is why the prophet emphasizes, Nahamu, nahamu ami, take a measure of solace, because you are all, after all, My people, saith the Lord. And perhaps the admiration of nations for a people caught in such turmoil and anguish, yet showing such love and sympathy for each other, is also something. Winning the admiration of free people in the world we live in is no small thing.

There is an old tradition that the sequence of the seven haftorahs of consolation after Tisha BeAv, tell a story.

The Almighty sent an angel to give a message of comfort to His people, “Nahamu nahamu ami, yomar Elokeichem”.

The people reply, refusing the comfort, saying “God has forsaken me and forgotten me”, “Vatomer Tziyon, azavani Hashem, vaHashem shecheichani” (Yeshayahu 49:14).

The angel returns to Hashem with that sad message that Israel refuses to be comforted, and is like a ship storm-tossed at sea, in the words of the haftorah of Reeh, “Aniya soarah, lo nuchama” (Yeshayahu 54:11).

Whereupon the Almighty tells His people that He Himself will give them comfort, “Anochi, Anochi hu menachemchem” (Yeshayahu 51:12). (Just as to a mourner we say, "HaMakom

Yenahem ...")

And in the haftorah of Ki Tetze the Almighty continues, that since He Himself is the comforter, "Sing, oh barren one, for your children will be many" (Yeshayahu 54:1). And in Ki Tavo, "Rise, shine, your light has come, "Kumi, Ori, ki ba orech" (Yeshayahu 60:1), for the glory of Hashem shines upon you, "Ukevod Hashem alayich zarach".

And the people are finally comforted, "Sos asis baHashem, tagel nafshi beElokay" (Haftorah of Nitzavim, Yeshayahu 61:10).

At this time, when we leave Tisha BeAv behind, we feel with our people of old, that there is no consolation that can come by human or even supernatural forces. The only consolation is Hashem's Word and His promise of GEULA SHELEMA. We wait for that day and work for it. As the prophet declares, "In all their troubles He is with them: ... with His love and His compassion He redeemed them. And He will carry them onward, all the days of this world." "Bechol tzaratam lo tzar ... beahavato uvechemlato Hu gealam, vayenatlem vayenasem kol yemei olam."

We therefore pray that those heroes and heroines that have made the desert bloom, will be joined by many others to repeat their superhuman achievements, and the blessing of the Almighty Himself will be with them, as they once again cause the passage to come true, "Ki kaaretz totzi tzimcha, ukegana zerueha tatzmiach, ken Hashem Elokim yatzmniach tzedaka utehilah neged kal hagoyim" (Yeshayahu 61:11). And as nations have begun to admire, they will eventually wonder at the great miracle of geulah shelema which only Hashem Himself will bring for our people, HIGDIL HASHEM LAASOS IM ELE, and all Israel will be joyous again, "HIGDIL HASHEM LAASOS IMANU, HAYINU SEMECHIM.

(Submitted by Nisson E. Shulman)