

The Path Forward

First Week

Three “Hays” “Halo”-“Hove”- Halacha

The Path Forward to Rosh Hashanah are the seven weeks beginning with the *haftarah* of *Eschanan*, the Shabbos immediately after *Tisha B'av*. These seven weeks of comfort can be seen as a pathway of seven steps, a *Messilah L'elokeinu*.

Nachamu Nachamu:

Would you agree that a *Haftarah*, a *perek* of *Navi* that begins with the words “*Nachamu, Nachamu*” is about the *Nechama* (consolation)?

Well, Rashi agrees with you. The seven weeks following *Tisha B'Av* are referred to as “*Shiva d’Nachamusa*”, seven weeks of consolation. The primary job of the *Navi* and the primary job of a leader during a time of *Nechamma* is not to rebuke.

Isaiah 40:1 נחמו נחמו:

Console, you, My prophets, console My people
נחמו אתם נביאי נחמו את עמי
- Rashi

Rashi explains the repetition of the word “*Nachamu*” (Console). Rashi says the *Navi* Isaiah returns to his future prophesies because at this juncture and until the end of the *Sefer* are words of consolation. There is a “stop” placed in this section of the *Navi* to separate between the future Prophecy of Consolation and the Prophecy of Retribution:

נחמו נחמו. חוזר על נבואותיו העתידות לפי שמכאן ועד סוף הספר דברי נחמו' הפסיק פרשה זו בינם לבין פורענו'
נחמו אתם נביאי נחמו את עמי

So, the words “*Nachamu. Nachamu*” **is** *Nechama*, it is comfort.

Now what kind of *Nechama* is it?

Rashi doesn't explain what kind of *Nechama* is being referred to in these words of *Nachamu Nachamu* by Isaiah explicitly, but he does something that is very interesting. Rashi quotes the following verse in Isaiah 40:2:

דברו על לב ירושלים וקראו אליה כי מלאה צבאה כי נרצה עונה כי לקחה מיד יהוה כפלים בכל חטאתיה

Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her, for her term of service has been fulfilled, for her sin is satisfied, for she has taken from the Hand of Hashem double in all her sins.

Rashi looks at this *passuk*:

כִּי מְלָאָה צָבָאָה כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ כִּי לְקָחָהּ מִיַּד יְהוָה כָּפְלִים בְּכָל חַטָּאתֶיהָ

For her term of service [has been] fulfilled, [because payment for] her sin is satisfied, because she has taken from the Hand of Hashem double [repayment in] all her sins.

Rashi then comments on the first *Pasuk* of the seventh paragraph of *Iyov*.

הֲלֹא-צָבָא לְאָנוּשׁ עַל-[עַלִּי-] אֶרֶץ וְכִימִי שְׂכִיר יָמָיו יָמָיו

Is not man on earth for a limited time, and are his days [not] like the days of a hireling?

הֲלֹא : Is there not ?

צָבָא ; A set time?

In other words, ... כִּי מְלָאָה צָבָאָה ... There is a set time! Things End.

What is interesting is that Rashi focuses on the **הֲלֹא**. If you look at the different *Pesukim* in *Perek* 40 of Isaiah and also in *perek Zayin* in *Iyov*, you will find that there are numerous mentions of **הֲלֹא הֲלֹא** :

Isn't it true?

הֲלֹא: In't it true?

... הֲלֹא: is it not true?

Isaiah 40:21:

הֲלֹא תִדְעוּ הֲלֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ הֲלֹא הִגַּד מֵרֵאשִׁית לָכֶם הֲלֹא הִבְיַנְתֶּם מִסִּדְוֹת הָאָרֶץ

Isn't it true that you know? Isn't it true that you heard? Isn't it true that You were told from the start? Do you not understand the establishment of earth?

Isaiah 40:28:

הֲלֹא יִדְעַת אִם-לֹא שָׁמַעַת אֱלֹהֵי עֲנָלָם | יְהוָה בּוֹרֵא קִצּוֹת הָאָרֶץ לֹא יִשְׁעַף וְלֹא יִיגַע אֵין חִקְר לִתְבוּנָתוֹ

Is it not true that you know, Have you not heard that the Source of all powers eternally is The Creator of the earth from end to end; He never grows faint or weary, His Understanding cannot be fathomed.

There is one place in *Navi* where a *Niveeah* uses the “הֲלֹא” approach. *Devorah HaNiveeah* uses the terms “isn't it true” and “is it not true” because the *Niveeah* has to be able **to gently convey** something that's going on. So, she does not want to pontificate, and she doesn't want to have a declaration. So when *Devorah* speaks and offers a *Nevuah*, she introduces it with this word **הֲלֹא**.

Judges, 4:6

ותשלח ותקרא לברק בן־אבינעם מקדש נפתלי ותאמר אליו הלא צנה | יהנה אלהי־ישראל לך ומשכת
בהר תבור ולקחת עמך עשרת אלפים איש מבני נפתלי ומבני זבלון

She summoned Barak, son of Avinoam, of Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, Did not God, The Lord of Israel command, “Go march up to Mount Tabor, and take with you a thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun?”

Judges: 4:14

ותאמר דברה אל־ברק קום כי זה היום אשר נתן יהנה את־סיסרא בידיך הלא יהנה יצא לפניך וירד ברק
מהר תבור ועשרת אלפים איש אחרי

And Devora said to Barak, “Up! For this is the day on which G-d delivers Sisera into your hands: Is it not Hashem that goes out before you?” Barak charged down Mount Tabor, followed by the ten thousand men.

Why is this concept of introducing a *navuah* with “ הלא ” . . . “ *is it so?* ” . . . so important?

The reason is that Rashi says that **נחמו נחמו** are words of *Nechama*. Now, if you go through most of the *Midrashim*, for example *Medrash Tanchuma*, on the words **נחמו נחמו**, the *Midrashim* give an explanation for saying the words **נחמו נחמו** twice. The reason is because all the *Makos* and all of the sins of the Jewish people are double.

Eicha 1:2

בלו תבכה

בלו תבכה בלילה ודמעתה על לחיה אין־לה מנחם מכל־אהביה כל־רעיה בגדו בה היא ליה לאיבים

She weeps and will weep in the night, her cheek wet with tears. There is none to comfort her of all her loved ones. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her foes.

Eicha 1:8

חטא חטאה

חטא חטאה ירושלם על כן לנידה היתה כל מכבדיה הזלזלה כי ראו ערותה גם היא נאנחה ותשב אחור

A sin has Jerusalem sinned; therefore she has become impure. All who honored her, despise her for they have seen her nakedness; and she also sighs and shrinks back

Eicha 1:16

עיני עיני

על אלה אני בוכיה **עיני עיני** ירדה מים כי רחוק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי היו בני שוממים כי גבר אויב.

For these things do I weep, my eyes flow with wet tears, because far from me is any comforter, to restore my spirit; my children are forlorn, for the enemy has strengthened.

Why is the concept of “Double” presented? Because the Jewish People sinned double, *Kiflayim*, as it is written in many places.

Yirmiyahu 16:18

וְשַׁלַּמְתִּי רִאשׁוֹנָה מִשְׁנֵה עֲוֹנֵם וְחַטָּאתֵם עַל חִלְלֵם אֶת־אֶרֶץ בְּנִבְלַת שְׁקוּצֵיהֶם וְתוֹעֲבוֹתֵיהֶם
מִלֹּאֵי אֶת־בְּחֵלְתִי

And I will pay first the doubling of their iniquity and their sin, for their profaning My land; with the carcass of their detestable things and their abominations they filled My heritage.

Yirmiyahu 2:13

עָשָׂה עַמִּי אֵתִי עָזְבוּ מִקּוֹר מַיִם חַיִּים לְחַצְב לֶהֱם בְּאֵרוֹת בְּאֵרוֹת נִשְׁבְּרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכְלוּ הַמַּיִם
כִּי שְׁתֵּי־רָעוֹת

For My people have committed **two evils**; they have forsaken Me, the spring of living waters, to dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that do not hold water.

Yeshayahu 40:2

דַּבְּרוּ עַל לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם וְקִרְאוּ אֵלֶיהָ כִּי מִלֵּאָה צָבְאָה כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ כִּי לִקְחָה מִיַּד יְהוָה כְּפָלִים בְּכָל
חַטָּאתֶיהָ.

Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her, for she has become full, for her iniquity has been appeased, for she has taken from the hand of G-d double for all her sins.

How can we understand this Medrash?

"כִּי לִקְחָה מִיַּד יְהוָה כְּפָלִים בְּכָל חַטָּאתֶיהָ" . . . "כְּפָלִים"
For she has taken from the hand of G-d double for all her sins.

Don't give me a speech ... נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עִמִּי ... comfort, comfort me.

And then Hashem says, "Listen, the reason I am giving you double comfort is because you sinned double." We sinned doubly and therefore Hashem had to punish us double!

Ok, so now imagine I say to you, “comfort, comfort” ... and then you ask me why are you saying this twice?

And I reply, “Well, quite frankly, you sinned double, and because you sinned double, Hashem collected from you double, so therefore I'm saying a double *nechama*, a double consolation”.

We are told that the double wording of “Comfort, Comfort” (Nachamu, Nachamu) is because the Jewish people sinned doubly.

But does that explanation sound comforting?

Perhaps we can better understand how this is comforting by looking at the Rashi on the first verse in Isaiah, chapter 40 of “Nachamu, Nachamu”. The particular נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ as referenced by the *Medrash* is talking specifically about our situation.

So, the way I understand Rashi on the first verse in Isaiah, chapter 40 of “Nachamu, Nachamu” is that this particular נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ as referenced by the *Medrash* is talking specifically about our situation such as being threatened by a second wave of the Coronavirus.

The sense of “Uh oh ... it’s not over” is still with us, and so our objective, our eyes are already on the נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ.

We want the step that immediately follows *Tisha B'av*. So, if *Tisha B'av* is on a Thursday, by Shabbat, we’re already going for נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ. It’s so quick.

The only way to achieve *Nechama* so quickly after *Tisha B'av* is to first properly understand and address the sense of אֲלֵהּ ... Hashem, I don’t know what to do.

It is this sense of “I don’t know” (אֲלֵהּ) that provides the opening for the comfort we need to move forward, and therefore it is incumbent upon our leaders to provide us with consolation.

The job of leaders and the job of *Rabanim*; the job of *Poskim* and the job of *Baalei Hashkafa*; the job of teachers and of parents; according to Rashi, their job is that their primary obligation at this time is to give *Nechama*.

Part of the process of *nechama* is to take the step to **learn** from the situations presented to us, and to make changes accordingly.

Okay, so now what does this mean for us? How can anybody know what is going to happen with America?

If Chas Vishalom there is no response, if we haven’t changed, and if we flaunt what has happened casually and say “okay, COVID is over...” -- Then we didn’t learn anything permanently from this custom-made-message from G-d in the form of an invisible enemy that brought the entire world to its knees.

This we know.

But, be comforted! Be Comforted! נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ If we are able to access what is promised – that Consolation, that double *Nechama*, then, actually, we will be able to prevent a catastrophe *B’eZRas Hashem*.

So, What is it that we have to do? An incredible thing! Rav Yoseph ben Simeon Kara (also known as the Mahari Kara; 1065 –1135). The Mahari Kara was one of the early, early Rishonim, and one of his commentaries says, ”יֹאמַר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם” (“Says Elokim”).

Isaiah 40:1

נְחֲמוּ נְחֲמוּ עַמִּי יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

Console, console My people, says your Lord.

How does a Navi, How does a teacher, give this type of *Nechama*?

יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

The comfort occurs when you realize that whatever Hashem is saying to you in Torah, and in Mitzvos, and in Navi, when you are being spoken to -- notice the *loshon*, the words, are in the present tense: “לשון הוה”

The Present Tense conveys the message that I can take whatever I'm learning (Now), and apply it to me in an immediate sense. Meaning if we are responding to what we are learning immediately we can prevent and change what is now destined to happen on Tisha B'av.

This means that we can try to respond to what is happening to us by applying what we are learning immediately to our situation. In this way, we can prevent and change, *I'H*”, for the Revealed Good, what we fear might happen on *Tisha B'av*.

The first concept is that using the “*Hove*” approach, taking everything “Now” (in the) Present tense means that we don't have to wait, we have the ability to respond now. This is a *Nechama*.

The second concept is an unbelievable thing. What is this *Nechama*?

דַּבְּרוּ עַל-לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם	Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim
וְקִרְאוּ אֵלַי	call to her
כִּי מִלְאָה צָבְאָה	now her trials are over.
כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ	her sins have been pardoned.
כִּי לָקְחָהּ מִיַּד יְהוָה כְּפָלַיִם	for she has received from Hashem's hand double,
בְּכָל-חַטָּאתֶיהָ	for all her sins.

What is the Navi saying?

Do you ever hear someone say, “Hashem, no matter what I have done wrong, do I deserve to be punished this much?”

Here, the Navi is saying, “You know what? You have a sense that Hashem has doubled your punishment for what you did”. So, the Navi is answering you and says, “You're right”.

Can you imagine a Navi speaking for Hashem?

Then what does the Navi say?

קוֹל קוֹרֵא בַּמִּדְבָּר So, a voice cries out in the desert.

פְּנֵי turn, face,

דְּרַךְ יְהוָה Hashem's way.

יִשְׁרֹף בְּעֵרְבָה מְסִלָּה take a path through this dry plain and find a *Messila*, a pathway

לְאֵלֵהֵינוּ back to our Lord.

Now, the Mahari Kara continues on this *Passuk* and asks, "What is the best way of Nechama?"

To give people a "*Halicha*" --to take Halacha and show the people that *Halacha* is providing them with מְסִלָּה לְאֵלֵהֵינוּ a pathway for the individual to reconnect with Hashem in a better and more beautiful way.

Shiva Asar B'tamuz was a perfect opportunity to use this approach of using Halacha as a Pathway to Hashem if done properly.

Doing *Shiva Asar B'tamuz* properly means we use the Halacha as explained by the Rambam (related to *Hilchos Taaneeyos*) to understand and do what is incumbent upon us when we have experienced an event such as this global Pandemic, and, how we must use and apply the lessons that we were meant to learn in that situation of *magefa*. Therefore, we had an opportunity on the 17th of Tamuz to use the Halachos of fasting during a *magefa* to address the Rambam's guidance related to how we should conduct ourselves after such events such as COVID.

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*** Most of the translation used is from Sefaria but our approach and understanding of the word will evolve in this work..