

# The Path Forward

## Nachamu Nachamu

*Haftara of Parshas Eikev*  
*Week #2 of "Shiva D'Nechamasa", Part 1.*

*Nechama From Hashem.*

- I hear your suffering.
- Study the two people, Avraham and Sara who triggered our relationship with Hashem.
- Pursue righteousness by being seekers of Hashem to serve Hashem with Joy, happiness, and thanksgiving.

When I listen to some people speak about the *Aveiros* that led to the *Churban Bayis*, and how we have to do *Teshuvah* to address them and other challenges; I actually hear that method as "anti" *Nechama* (Comfort) – meaning this approach does not feel comforting.

Because, let's say, when I was suffering after one of my worst surgeries and someone came to me and said, "maybe Hashem is punishing you".

I wouldn't think that was a wise thing to say. It certainly did not feel comforting to me.

So, let's say I am suffering over the *Churban* and I go to the Prophet *Yirmiyahu* (Jeremiah) and say, "This is unbearable for me!"

And then let's say that *Yirmiyahu* responds, "well, you're the one who caused this whole thing anyway, aren't you?"

Really???

Are you really expecting *Yirmiyahu* to say that? "I warned you! You didn't listen! This is your fault!"

Is **this** how we give *Nechama* (consolation)?

We did learn from the *Rishonim*, (the leading Rabbis and *Poskim* who lived in the 11th to the 15th century) that “*Nachamu, Nachamu*” means that the primary job of a *Navi*, from that point in time of “*Nachamu*” (the seven weeks after Tisha B’av) – is to provide the *Nechama* .

The *Navi*’s function includes making sure people have a sense of *Nechama* when learning, praying, and when serving Hashem. When dealing with these horrible circumstances, the *Navi* needs to give his people *Nechama*!

What's the big deal? Make it beautiful! The *Navi* should make the situation and the fixing comforting all the time and allow the people to confront themselves.

So, some people walk around saying, “You need to do Teshuvah”, or “you are too liberal”, or “You don't cover your hair!” or “You're not *Tzniusdik!*”, “You wear shorts!”, “You are an *Apikores!*”

These kinds of words are not comforting.

To idealize what it is HaShem wants from human beings doesn't work for me, I'm sorry.

The Second weeks' *Haftara* of *Parshas Eikev* begins with Isaiah 49:14

וַתֹּאמֶר צִיּוֹן עָזַבְנִי יְהוָה וְאֲדָנָי שָׁכַחְנִי

*And Zion said You abandoned me and forgot me, Hashem.*

Tzion actually turns to the *Ribono Shel Olam* and says, “You know, HaShem, You let me down!”

And, HaShem says, "I hear you".

Tzion says, “You abandoned me!”

*Isaiah 49:15*

הֲתִשְׁכַּח אִשָּׁה עוֹלָה מֵרַחֵם בֶּן בְּטֶנֶה גַם אֵלֶּה תִשְׁכַּחַנָּה וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא אֶשְׁכַּחַךְ

*Can a woman forget her baby, or (abandon) the child of her womb? Though she might forget, I never could forget you.*

HaShem’s response, “Why would you say I abandoned you? I would never abandon you! Never! Why would you think I abandoned you?”

The whole idea “what's your *Aveira?*” and things like that comes much later in that *haftorah*.

Do you know the context of it?

Chapter 51 in Isaiah in the first two verses:

שְׁמַעוּ אֵלַי רְדֹפֵי צְדָק מִבְּקוּשֵׁי יְהוָה הַבֵּיטוּ אֶל-צוּר חֲצַבְתֶּם וְאֶל-מַקְבַּת בּוֹר גִּקְרַתֶּם

*Listen to Me, you who pursue (righteousness), seekers of Hashem. Look to the rock you were hewn from, to the quarry you were dug from.*

הַבֵּיטוּ אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אָבִיכֶם וְאֶל-שָׂרָה תְּחוּלְלֵכֶם כִּי-אֶחָד קָרָאתִיו וְאַבְרָהָם וְאַרְבֵּהוּ

*Look back to Abraham your father and to Sara who brought you forth. For he was only one when I called to him, but I blessed him and made him many.*

HaShem says, firstly, “This this is what I need from you, these two verses”. That is it.

What triggered this relationship between HaShem and Avroham and Sara?

In other words, HaShem is not telling us about Torah, He is not telling us about *Mitzvos*, and HaShem is not telling us about *Halacha*, or about gay rights or black lives matter. HaShem is not talking about any of those things, Okay?

HaShem is saying: “I am not telling you about the way you dress. I am not telling you about how much you learn or how you use your time.” He is really not.

Basically, HaShem wants you to look at two people, “*Look back to Abraham your father and to Sara who brought you forth*” That's it. Our entire relationship with HaShem is because of these two people, Avroham and Sara. Know that our relationship with HaShem is because of them So, can you figure out what the relationship was about for them?

That is what HaShem wants from you.

HaShem is not looking for some idealized image of what **you think** HaShem expects of you. HaShem is not expecting that you will be the world's greatest human beings in the entire history of the world. “I am not expecting that”, says HaShem.

So, we say, “HaShem, the way I grew up, and all that has happened to me is enough! You put me in a really bad situation and quite frankly right now I am suffering even more. And some of my suffering is because I didn't have the clarity and maturity and the emotional wherewithal to deal with the different things that were coming my way, and you are still punishing me ! What do you want from me? I need to know clearly that You know the demands on me are too much. So please stop demanding me to work through all these issues!”

We say to HaShem, “I want you to look at me and tell me that I am doing a pretty good job working on nurturing my relationship with you.”

We want HaShem to understand, "I am who I am. I'm who you made me, and I appreciate everything that you have done for me .... But, please..."

Isaiah 51:3

כִּי נַחַם יְהוָה צִיּוֹן נַחַם כָּל חֲרֻבֹתֶיהָ וַיִּשֶׂם מִדְּבָרָהּ כִּיעֲדוּן וְעֲרֻבְתָּהּ כִּגְן יְהוָה שְׁשׁוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה וּמִצָּא בָּהּ תוֹדָה וְקוֹל זִמְרָה

*(For HaShem will comfort) Zion, (HaShem will) comfort all her ruins; He shall make her desert like Eden, her (plains) like the Garden of HaShem. (Joy and happiness) shall (be found in her) thanksgiving and the (voice) of music.*

Look at these words

כִּגְן יְהוָה שְׁשׁוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה וּמִצָּא בָּהּ

*He shall make her wasteland like the Garden of HaShem. (Joy and happiness) shall (be found in her)*

What else?

שְׁשׁוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה וּמִצָּא בָּהּ

*Joy and happiness shall be found in her.*

And, then what follows?

תוֹדָה תוֹדָה תוֹדָה! *Thanksgiving*

וְקוֹל זִמְרָה *And the voice of music.*

Notice that there are two "Nicham's (HaShem will comfort):

כִּי נַחַם יְהוָה צִיּוֹן נַחַם כָּל חֲרֻבֹתֶיהָ

We say to HaShem, "HaShem, You want us to bring you a *Karbon Todah* – a Thank You Offering? Okay, then provide us with some heavy-duty doses of the *Nechama* matter.

We say to HaShem, "HaShem, You want us to serve You with *Sasson V'simcha* – with joy and happiness? Ok, so we need to experience Your *Nechama* on us!

We say to HaShem, “HaShem, You want us to do *Sasson V'simcha Todah v'kol Zimrah?* To serve you with this Joy, Happiness, Gratitude and with a Musical Voice?) Okay, then we need to experience the promise that the *arvasa* (plains) will become a garden of Hashem יהוה וגן and the *midbar* (desert) will become *Eden?*”

And that happens when somebody who is a seeker of Hasem and pursues righteousness and asks HaShem to look at from where we came from, how we were made.

שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי רֹדְפֵי צְדָק מִבְּקֹשֵׁי יְהוָה הַבֵּיטוּ אֶל צוּר חֲצִבְתֶּם וְאֶל מְקֹרֶת בּוֹר נִקְרָתֶם

*Toras Hamincha*, Rabeinu Yaakov Skili, *Z”tzl* says on the above *pasuk* that it is very possible to pursue a life of total righteousness and not be a seeker of Hashem.

In other words, statements like, “From now on the New York Times can only say Pro-Palestinian and no more Pro- Israel comments to be written in their paper.

We are the most righteous generation in history Don't tell me that's "*rodfei Tzedek*”, pursuers of righteousness. It's not *Rodfei Tzedek* who are listening as the verse requires. In fact, how do you know who are true *Rodfei Tzedek*? The *Toras Hamincha* says - you know how you know? They are seekers of HaShem, *Mivakshei Hashem*.

You are only a *Rodef Tzedek* (a person who pursues Righteousness) if you are a *Mivakesh HaShem*, a person who seeks HaShem, otherwise this “righteousness” is not really *Tzedek*.

You want to be a person who does good, but that alone is not *Tzedek*, righteous. It's impossible to find righteousness if one is not seeking HaShem.

There cannot be a perfectly balanced world without the combinations of righteousness and seeking HaShem. We find now that criminals get out of jail and are allowed to bypass posting bail because we are told that it's “too hard” for the people who commit crimes to post the bail money. Ok, so people are going to get killed. “Okay, no one's perfect” is what a society devoid of this proper balance would say.

Can I ask you something seriously?

During this time, let's say you happen upon the tent of Avraham and Sarah *Imainu*, our role models of pursuers of righteousness and seekers of HaShem, and you want to go in?

Are they going to take your temperature before you go in during this time or not? Or are they not?

Are they going to ask you to wear a mask when you go in and to sterilize your hands before you go into their tent? Or are they just going to open the door for you?

Do you think Sarah *Imainu* is going to let anyone into her tent without a mask and without taking their temperature and without making them sterilize their hands? I don't think so.

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