

The Path Forward

Nachamu Nachamu

Haftara of Parshas Eikev

Week #2 of "Shiva D'Nechamasa", Part 2

Nechama from Hashem:

- HaShem will not forget your connections with Him - He gave us a contract.
- Commit to doing *Chazara* to activate this "contract" with HaShem.
- Commit to hold on to positive memories and forget the negatives.
- HaShem knows that He needs to address the different feelings and challenges that we have, and He is listening to how we are suffering.

"Hashem has forgotten"

The second Haftara is about "Hashem has forgotten".

Issaiah 49:14

וַתֹּאמֶר צִיּוֹן עֲזַבְנִי יְהוָה וַאֲדֹנָי שָׁכַחְנִי

And Tzion said Hashem has abandoned me and Hashem has forgotten me.

The way I understand the *Gmarrah* in *Brachos 32:B* is to know that we have a special *bris* (contract) called, "The Things That HaShem Will Not Forget".

This promise has tremendous implications, especially for Amalek, because there is a mitzvah to remember Amalek and not to forget; and yet there is another mitzvah to erase the memory of Amalek, totally!

In other words, this *bris* is reaffirming that every one of our questions, and every one of our insights, and every second that we spend learning or thinking Torah thoughts, all of this is remembered by HaShem. This means that every second that one spouse spends taking care of the children for their husband or their wife to learn Torah, this is Remembered by HaShem. Every *chesed* and every thought or deed in Torah and Mitzvot are all part of this *bris*, the contract and the promise, that HaShem will not forget.

HaShem promises to forget the mistakes that we make. HaShem will forget the *aveiros* that we committed. But, our *avodas Hashem*, our service of God, is so precious to HaShem that He will never forget our service of Him. HaShem promises us that our service of Him is so precious to Him, that He will never forget us. We are more precious to HaShem than a child is to a mother.

This means that the *bris* is a truly wonderful and fantastic thing.

It is my understanding that we activate this *bris* of “*lo Eshkacheich*” – the promise of “*HaShem will not forget*” by our practice of an internal commitment to do the same “*lo Eshkacheich*” – not forgetting.

The first commitment to not forgetting is *Chazara (review)* of anything that we learn. This means that our *chazara* is a *bris* that states to HaShem, “learning Your Torah is so precious to me, that I never want to lose it, I want to keep it in *Olam Habah, Birshut Shamayim* (in the possession of Heaven),

The second commitment, together with the *Chazara*, is that we need to commit to holding onto all of our positive memories, and, also, to commit to letting go of, and being willing to forget, the negative memories.

This is a fascinating concept. If one speaks to therapists, you realize that our natural tendency is to hold on to the negative feeling-state much more than the positive. Somehow it is harder to hold on to a positive memory than to a negative memory because of the way we are raised. In fact, this phenomenon is in direct proportion to how validated people are as children.

If children are validated and treasured, then they can remember all the good aspects of their life more easily. However, if children’s feelings are ignored, and if children’s questions are annoyances, then these children do not feel treasured.

This is why I told you about my children's *Bar mitzvahs* and *Bat Mitzvahs*. When one of my children had a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, I would hand them a list of all their best questions. I kept a list of my children’s most beautiful insights and also their most precious acts that I had the *zechus* to observe as they were growing up.

Some people might not have enjoyed learning with my father *zatzal*, because he spent 10 years doing 10 *pesukim*, or five years doing *Perek chelek* instead of just doing that in one year like most other Rabbis teach. My father, *zatzal*, wasn't as interested in telling people what he thought, he was more interested in helping people learn how to ask questions.

The response "*Nachamu, Nachamu*" is to have both remembering and forgetting. It is not enough to only have the "remembering" aspect, one also needs certain things to be forgotten.

I know that every time I stand up and *daven Shmoneh Esrai* and get to the blessing of *Teshuva* and the blessing of *Selicha* (forgiveness) --- that I have to address relationships which I had 40 years ago.

I wouldn't be a new person if I hadn't made those mistakes and learned from them. Yet, I don't walk around pretending that I'm a *Tzadik* just because I learned from these mistakes.

Therefore, what is it that Hashem "remembers"?

What does HaShem remember?

When HaShem thinks of us, does He think of how we messed up?

Or does HaShem remember, "wow, that was a mistake that you had made, and look! I see how you turned that mistake into something beautiful"?

Halacha does not allow somebody to remind someone else of their past mistakes, and that is the bris of "I won't forget". Of course HaShem is not going to forget the *Eigel* (the sin of the golden calf). However, this is the point – HaShem is not going to remember the *Eigel* as, "you made a mistake". HaShem doesn't remember the act by thinking of the sin. HaShem thinks of the act by looking at "what did you do after the *Eigel*?"

HaShem looks at our mistakes and looks to see how we responded to them. HaShem wants to know what we do with our mistakes. It's a totally different perspective.

The *nechama* (comfort) is **not** Hashem saying, "I won't forget you". the *Nechama* is:

וּתְּאִמֶּר צִיּוֹן עֲזַבְנִי יְהוָה וְאֲדֹנָי שָׁכַחְנִי.

And Tzion said, "You abandoned me Hashem, and You have forgotten me..."

The *Nechama* is that Hashem knows that He needs to address this with us, He didn't forget us, He is going to work with us on our mistake.

This whole entire *haftorah* is the back and forth with the *Ribono Shel Olam* about what we're feeling. He's paying attention to everything that we're saying. His addressing it --- is in itself --- the opposite of forgetting us. That's the emphasis.

So, now we have:

וַתֹּאמֶר צִיּוֹן עֲזַבְנִי יְהוָה

And Zion said You abandoned me and forgot me.

So we ask Hashem, in verse 24 of the 49th chapter of *Isaiah*:

הֲיִקַּח מִגְבוּרַת מַלְקוּחַ וְאִם־שָׁבִי צְדִיק יִמָּלֵט

Can prey be taken back from a strong one; can the righteous captive escape?

We say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Look, Hashem, how are you going to do this?"

And Hashem says, "Ok I'll do this. Don't worry. I know how to do it!"

Verse 25:

כִּי־כֵן אָמַר ה' גַּם־שָׁבִי גְבוּרַת יִקָּח וּמַלְקוּחַ עֲרִיץ יִמָּלֵט וְאֶת־יְרִיבֶךָ אֲנֹכִי אֲרִיב וְאֶת־בְּנֵיךָ אֲנֹכִי אוֹשִׁיעַ

Yet thus said Hashem: Captives shall be taken from a (strong one) And the (prey of the mighty) can escape: For I will contend with your adversaries, And I will (save) your children.

Then in *Isaiah 50:1*:

כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֵי זֶה סִפֵּר כְּרִיתוֹת אִמְכֶם אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתִּיהָ אוֹ מִי מְנוּשִׁי אֲשֶׁר־מְכַרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לֹא הָן בְּעוֹדְתֵיכֶם נִמְכַרְתֶּם וּבְפִשְׁעֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְתָּה אֶתְכֶם

Thus said Hashem: Where is your mother's divorce document with which I sent her away...

We infer what is on our minds from this verse since HaShem says, "I never divorced you". That means what were we saying to Hashem?

We felt as if we were divorced. And HaShem understood this.

As you go through these chapters of *Isaiah*, notice that *Yeshayahu* is *not saying* you're not allowed to say that we felt divorced. He is also not saying "you're the one who messed this up". That is not what the *Navi* says. *Yeshayahu* doesn't begin with *Tochacha* (reproach). The *Navi*

doesn't begin by responding, "I warned you. I warned you! Why don't you listen to me?" Right? I mean, come on. What kind of Navi would that be? What kind of Rebbie is the Ribono Shel Olam? They are not saying that you caused the issues and made mistakes and therefore you got punished. It is not what Hashem does!

This is what HaShem says: "What's bothering you?"

Tzion responds, "I feel abandoned".

Hashem says, "So why did you do this? You have so much power! How could you let this happen?"

Tzion says, "Well, I mean, you know, there was some tension between us, so you divorced me".

Hashem says, "Where is the divorce? Show me the *ghet!* There is no Bill of Divorce, in fact you have the opposite! You have the *ksuba*, the marriage contract, you have the Torah, so you don't have a divorce. You have a marriage contract."

Hashem says, "I know what you are feeling, you are feeling as if I divorced you."

It is very easy to read the words and think that they say, "You know I never divorced you". But it is even better to hear, even more comforting to hear, The Ribono Shel Olam saying, "I know what you're feeling". If HaShem knows what we are feeling, then He did not divorce us.

Hashem says, "You can do whatever you want. You're not going to lose your father".

Because what happens in the second verse?

מִדּוּעַ בָּאתִי וְאֵין אִישׁ קָרָאתִי וְאֵין עֹנֶה הַקְצֹר קִצְרָה יְדִי מִפְדּוּת וְאִם-אֵין-גִּי לֹחַ לְהַצִּיל הֲוּן בְּגַעַרְתִּי אַחֲרֵיב
וְאִם אֲשִׁים נְהָרוֹת מִדְבָּר תִּבְאֵשׁ דְּגַתָּם מֵאֵין מַיִם וְתָמַת בַּצִּמָּא

Why, when I came, was no one there, Why, when I called, would no one respond? Is my arm too short to rescue? Have I not the power to save? With a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, And turn rivers into desert. Their fish stink from lack of water; they lie dead of thirst.

Eventually Hashem is getting across this message. "I am very much listening to you. I am listening to you so carefully that I even hear what you are not articulating". We see this because the Navi is saying all the things that are on our minds beginning with verse 49:1

וַתֹּאמֶר צִיּוֹן עָזַבְנִי יְהוָה וְאִדְנִי שָׁכַחְנִי

And Tzion said, You abandoned me Hashem, and You forgot me

Yes?

What happens when someone listens that carefully? Eventually, the other person, if they are a *mentch*, at a certain point, the other person will begin to respond by also listening back.

That is the second verse. Now Hashem says, "I want to talk." HaShem says, "I've been trying to communicate with you long before this whole thing happened. Why didn't you let me communicate?"

So now, picture yourself walking in the old city of Yerushalayim. Can you imagine the Old city, surrounded by walls, and there are armies approaching? Now, what you would be feeling?

Imagine you are walking in the old City of *Yerushalayim*, you are surrounded by walls and there are armies approaching. What would you be feeling inside these enclosed spaces ... surround by stone walls, ... as beautiful as it is, and everything? No one even knows what to say anymore. You don't know who is in charge. You don't know what's going on. Nothing makes sense. Have you seen pictures of Minneapolis? The city's on fire.

Portland is suing to get the federal government out because the federal government is stopping the looting and violence. It's this. This is what it is like. You don't know what's going on. And then Yeshayahu *Hanavi* is coming; and, you just know what he's going to do. He is going to tell you that you have to do this and that you have to do that, right? The Navi is going to tell you everything that you're doing wrong. You really don't want to hear him. You really do not want to hear that.

So, then Yeshayahu grabs on to your arm and says, "you really feel Hashem has left you? You really feel Hashem has forgotten you?"

When the Navi speaks to you, what you are really expecting him to say is, "Well you did this wrong..." But what the Navi really says is, "Do you really think that what Hashem is saying is 'what did you do wrong?' – No, that is not what HaShem is saying.

Now, what would *that* feel like?

What would it have felt like if Yeshayahu *Hanavi* is standing there and says to you, "Hashem knows how you feel."

I was lying in a hospital bed in Hanover Germany, it was not pleasant. I was doing my best to always smile, You can imagine, though, that it wasn't pleasant. It was scary at times because there were German doctors who enjoyed my suffering. That was just the way it was, and I continued, obviously, to daven.

I remember lying there in that German hospital bed, wondering, "if Yeshayahu *Hanavi* will come to me and say, "Hashem knows that you feel as if He is really angry with you." If I could have a Navi say that to me, it would have been safe to cry.

It would have even been safe to be scared.

So, Imagine you are in Yerushalayim and you're sitting with a bunch of friends and you are saying, "Why, Why is Hashem so unhappy with us?"

And then Yeshayahu comes and the Navi is walking down the street, and you hear him saying, "*Nachamu, Nachamu*. I'm not yelling at you, I am not giving you *Tochacha*, I am here to tell you that Hashem is worried about you."

You don't think that hearing that would have mattered? Of course it would matter – it would be comforting.

So, we think it is very easy during our times, many people find it easy to say, "Well, obviously Hashem doesn't like our shuls, and our davening, and our weddings, and Hashem doesn't like this and Hashem doesn't like that... and we must have committed all the Aveiros in the world."

But that is not how the Navi speaks to us.

In the Haftorah, Hashem sends Yeshayahu who says, "No... go away ..." to this kind of rhetoric

It's so easy to find all the problems we have and all of the things we do wrong.

But Hashem sends his Navi **not** to yell at us, but to comfort us. *Nachamu, Nachamu*.

Do you know a 14 year boy received a call from a Rebbie who said that he wanted the boy in his Yeshiva. And the boy replied, "But, I don't get excited about learning. So what did the Rebbe say? The Rebbe responded, "You know what? That's not your problem. That's my job. My job is to make you excited about learning." Like out of the blue he gets a call. Can you imagine a kid getting a call like that?

These beautiful things. That is what Yeshayahu is saying.

So, our job is to find the good, and to listen to how another person is hurting, because Hashem taught us to listen. And, Hashem taught us how to listen to even those things that are bothering us so much, that are so deeply important, that we sometimes do not even know how to articulate it.

By: Rabbi Simcha Weinberg

Editor: Mrs. Beth Wenger

