



Nachamu Nachamu Ami: Our Destiny

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

In the haftorah of Shabbat Nachamu, the prophet Yeshaya consoles the Jewish people, "Be comforted, be comforted, my people." The suffering of exile and the sins that brought it about are part of a journey. The day will come when we will see that it was all meant to bring us to our destiny. This is true for *geulat haprat* (individual redemption) as well as *geulat haklal* (national redemption). The Malbim says Hashem is speaking specifically to the prophets. He tells them, "You must comfort my people. You must tell them that the *geulah* will eventually come, either because of their merits or because they received their just punishment and achieved their rectification"

The Gemara writes that whenever Hashem remembers our sins he remembers the sin of the golden calf. The Lubliner Rav explains that the golden calf did not lead to our end. In fact Klal Yisrael gained atonement. Similarly, however far we fall there is always hope for return.

The prophet Yeshaya says further, "Speak to Yerushalayim's heart and call out to her that her time has been filled and her sins have been appeased." The heart of Yerushalayim is our ability to accept emotionally, not just rationally, that the process of exile was worth it. Part of the exhilaration that a runner experiences is not only the knowledge that he's reaching his goal, but the feeling of pushing his limits and seeing how far he can go. We grow by facing challenges. It's not just a trade-off, it's an expansion. This is our consolation.

The prophet Yeshaya continues, "There's a voice calling out in the desert, clear the way for Hashem, straighten out the plain, make a path for Him." In the end we will be comforted seeing that Hashem led us exactly where we needed to go. Rashi says this road is meant to return us from exile. At the seder we say, "Next year in Yerushalayim," but do we mean it? Do we find living in exile easier? The Gemara teaches that a person who lives outside Israel is considered an idol worshipper because he can only achieve an indirect relationship with Hashem. There's no parallel to the Divine intervention inherent in *Eretz Yisrael*.

The Navi says, "Every valley will be uplifted and every mountain and high place will go down and what is crooked will become straight." There are many obstacles, both material and spiritual, that will prevent a person from coming to Israel. They are compared to hills and valleys. But in the end Hashem will take them all away and reveal His presence.

"The grass will dry and the flowers will wilt but the word of Hashem will be established forever." No matter how much we suffer in exile, we must keep our spirits up. The mishna says the beginning of defeat is retreat. When we let ourselves despair, we prolong the journey towards our destiny.

"On a high mountain I'll go up to you, you who give good news to Tzion. Uplift your voice powerfully, you who bring good news to Yerushalayim. Lift up your voice loudly. Don't

be afraid. Say to the cities of Yehuda, behold here is Hashem." The Radak explains that just as a person who wants his voice to be heard will stand in a high place, our yearning for Hashem will elevate us to be willing to hear the prophecy that was given to us. Ultimately we will be redeemed and we will return.

"Behold Hashem will come with force. And his outstretched hand will be the source of his dominion. And his reward is with him and his action and repayment is before him." Hashem will reward the *tzaddikim*. He will shepherd us like a shepherd who gathers in his sheep. When Mashiach comes, Hashem's greatness will touch everyone at whatever level they're at. We will discover our *tikkun*, the messianic part within us that's redeemable. We will find our way back because Hashem will make the mountains low and the valleys high. We must not be afraid if we see people that seem irredeemable or distant.

"Who is there from whom we could take counsel, who could give us the understanding to go in the way Hashem has measured out?" The Torah itself is our guiding light in exile. It tells us how to respond to every possible life situation. We can't be taken in by the nation's threats or predictions. They are like dust on a scale. We don't understand Hashem's way but we have to be attuned to miracles. We are a nation that lives beyond the laws of nature.

Each one of us is created for a specific purpose. We are all redeemable and none of us will be left behind.

Tu B'av

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Gemara in Tannit tells us, "There were no *yomim tovim* (good occasions) in Israel more joyous than the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur." The spiritual happiness of atonement on Yom Kippur was deeply felt but what was so significant about Tu B'av?

The Gemara lists several occurrences. On this day the tribes were permitted to intermarry, the ban against marrying into the tribe of Binyamin was lifted, the generation of the desert ceased dying, Hoshea ben Eleh removed the sentries blocking the roads to

Jerusalem, the massacred Jews of Beitar were buried, and the wood for the altar was finally cut for the next year's sacrifices. In addition, the Mishna tells us that on this day the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed white clothing and dance in the fields and matches were made. But the Gemara alludes to something deeper. It tells us about the marriage bond between Hashem and the Jews. In the future, the *tzadikim* will form a circle in Gan Eden and dance and point to Hashem and say, "*Zeh Hashem kivini lo* (This is Hashem, we have put our faith in Him)."

What does dancing signify and why did the women in particular celebrate? What is the significance of borrowed clothing? Why does the Gemara give six reasons for the holiday, wouldn't one have been sufficient?

Tu B'av celebrates re-unification both among the Jewish people and with Hashem. When there is unity there is true joy. Disparity creates a terrible *kitrug* (accusation) in heaven. The *beit hamikdash* was destroyed because of dissension. On Tu B'av, the barriers between the tribes were lifted. When the generation of

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the desert stopped dying, Hashem's anger dissipated and He renewed His relationship with us once again. We celebrate the completion of gathering the wood because there is no greater joy than completing a *mitzva*. Now that they could ascend to Jerusalem, they could once again bask in the close proximity of the Divine Presence. Tu B'av is about separation and re-unification, distance and return. The knowledge that Hashem is One, creates unity. In the past we sensed this oneness and in the future we will once again experience it. This is the meaning of the Gemara that the *tzadikim* will dance in a circle. A circle is equidistant from the center. In the future world there will be total unity. Each *tzadik* will be able to see from the

vantage point of his friend. This too is why the daughters of Tzion went out in borrowed clothing. Borrowing clothes signifies friendship and harmony.

The common thread between Tu B'av and Yom Kippur is atonement. On Yom Kippur, the sin of the Golden Calf was forgiven while on Tu B'av the sin of the Spies was forgiven. This is why the women celebrate. They had no part in either sin. Tu B'av commemorates the burial of those massacred in Beitar. This teaches us that we must be grateful for the slightest good even in the midst of overwhelming tragedy. Likewise matches were made on Tu B'av. A marriage can only function if we recognize the smallest benefit we receive from our spouses.

The Sages designated Tu B'av as a holiday in order to help us bear our exile. By being thankful for the smallest good we can overcome our suffering. Sometimes in life, it's not about the one big answer, it's about the little reasons. If we can be grateful for all the small *chasadim* (kindnesses), we can build a genuine relationship with Hashem.

The Gemara calls both Yom Kippur and Tu B'av *Yamim Tovim*. *Tov* connotes something lasting. *Yom tov* is an elevated day whose qualities transcend time. It represents eternity even amidst adversity. Yom Kippur is about forgiveness of sin. Likewise Tu' B'av, which follows close on the heels of Tisha B'av, signifies rebirth from destruction.

Parshat Ve'etchanan

The Second Version of Aseret Hadibrot

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In his commentary on *Parshat Va'etchanan*, the Shem MiShmuel asks a question related to the *mitzva* of *Shabbat* which is mentioned twice. First in Parshat Yitro and then again in Parshat Va'etchanan. But while in Yitro the reason given for the *mitzva* is *zecher l'maaseh bereishit*- to remember that Hashem created the world, the reason given in *Va'etchanan* is *zecher l'yetziat Mitzrayim*- to remember that Hashem took us out of Egypt. Both reasons are valid and in *kiddush* we mention both, so why are they mentioned separately in the *Torah*?

The Rambam's opinion is that the main reason is *maaseh bereishit* and *yetziat Mitzrayim* proves that Hashem created the world as there were fundamental changes in nature during the ten plagues. Therefore, at *Matan Torah* when the first *luchot* were given, *maaseh bereishit* is mentioned as the reason. Whereas in *Va'etchanan* where Moshe reviews the *Torah*, he gives *yetziat Mitzrayim* as a supportive reason.

The Shem MiShmuel suggests a different approach. He brings a discussion between the Kotzker Rebbe and Reb Bunim M'Pesi-cha. Reb Bunim asked the Kotzker to tell him what the core impetus of his *avodat Hashem* was. The Kotzker replied with a verse from Yeshaya, "Look up at the heavens and see who created all this." Reb Bunim said he had a different motivator which was *yetziat Mitzrayim*, the precursor of the special relationship Hashem has with the Jewish people. The Shem MiShmuel elaborates on these two points of view. The Rambam writes that the way for a Jew to acquire love and fear

of Hashem is to contemplate Hashem's wondrous creation. Yet the Shem MiShmuel points out that the *Torah* constantly reiterates the importance of remembering *yetziat Mitzrayim* and many *mitzvot* are connected to it. Both ideas are true. There's a universal concept of serving Hashem through His creation and a more individual concept of serving Him as a Jew who was released from Egyptian bondage.

It seems at least from our tradition and the way Jews have lived for thousands of years that the vast majority are not approaching Hashem from the standpoint of creation. We do speak about it but it doesn't compare to the focus we have on *yetziat Mitzrayim* which signifies the special relationship Hashem has with the Jewish people. It is more difficult to connect to the universal concept of Hashem as the master of the universe and a lot easier to connect to the idea of *Elohai Yisrael*. The way of the Rambam and the Kotzker is the path of select *tzadikim*. However, the average Jew can most easily connect to *yetziat Mitzrayim*. The Shem MiShmuel explains that although discovering Hashem through creation might seem simple, as clearly there is a supernatural intelligence conducting the world, it's in fact difficult for the average person. We must first find Him through *yetziat Mitzrayim* and studying and living the *Torah* and then we can move on and try to discern Him through creation. *Yetziat Mitzrayim* is personal. Hashem stepped into history, into every Jew's life, to bring us to *Matan Torah* and He talks to us as an individual through *Torah*.

The *Torah* and *mitzvot* were given to us as a guidebook to help us navigate the difficulties of

this world. Once this stage of history ends and Hashem ushers in the redemption the *mitzvot* won't be necessary anymore because our character will be so much more developed and refined. There will no longer be evil forces driving us off the true path. By just looking at the universe without having to study *Torah*, Hashem's presence will be so visible that we will discern him straightaway. The Shem MiShmuel is suggesting that perhaps when Mashiach comes the focal service of Hashem will switch from remembering *yetziat Mitzrayim* and the giving of the *Torah* to recognizing Hashem as the master of creation.

Parshat Yitro describes the state of the Jews at *Har Sinai* when they accepted the *Torah*. They were on such a lofty level that they had no *yetzer hara* and they could discern Hashem directly within creation without having to focus on *yetziat Mitzrayim*. However, 40 years later in *Va'etchanan* when Moshe gave his farewell speech, the Jews had experienced many downfalls. The common people needed the *yetziat Mitzrayim* experience and the *Torah* to connect to Hashem.

So too, we in exile must focus on *yetziat Mitzrayim* and *Torah* study which is the guarantee for Jewish survival. Some mistakenly think they can connect to Him through scientific study while neglecting to learn *Torah*. This unfortunately led to widespread assimilation because this pathway which might seem apparent, is in fact quite elusive.

May we merit to achieve a true and lasting relationship with Hashem which will lead us to the *geulah* and the ultimate redemption.