

BS"D Parashiot Acharai-Kedoshim & Yom HaAtzmaut 5783

Redemption and Comfort

Yeshayahu 66:12-13

וְהָיָה כְּנָהָל נָהָל וְכִיָּסִיתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כְּנָהָל נָהָל וְכִיָּסִיתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כְּנָהָל נָהָל וְכִיָּסִיתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
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¹² *For thus says HaShem: I will extend prosperity to her like a river and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream, and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm and bounced on her knees.*

¹³ *As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*

The Navi (prophet) cites the word comfort three times in one verse. I understand that HaShem's intention is to bring comfort, solace, cheer, contentment, and inspiration to the exiled Jewish nation by restoring our presence in the holy land and in its spiritual center of Yerushalayim on three different occasions. If so, what are the differences between these three historical episodes of redemption and comfort?

In parashat Bechukotai (Devarim chapter 26:42), the Torah

states the paragraphs of the tochacha (reproach, admonition, and exhortation) that set before Am Yisrael, what their fate would be if they sin. Among the verses is the following reaffirmation of the eternal commitment between the Creator and His creations:

וְאֶנִּי זִכְרוֹת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי אִתְּךָ אֶבְרָהָם
'וְאֶנִּי זִכְרוֹת אֶת הָאָרֶץ

'And I shall remember my covenant with Ya'akov, and also my covenant with Yitzchak, and also my covenant with Avraham, and I shall remember the land'.

There are blatant difficulties with this pasuk:

1. What is the verse reaffirming HaShem's eternal commitment to Am Yisrael doing in the paragraphs of the threatening tochacha?
2. Why do the names of the forefathers appear in reverse order rather than the chronological order Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov?

The theme of this verse is the covenant between HaShem and the Jewish nation, so why is the "land" mentioned, and in such an incidental manner?

I submit:

The word "briti" (my covenant) in this pasuk refers to the sign of the covenant – brit milah (circumcision) imbedded in the flesh of a Jewish male.

Avraham's grandson Ya'akov was born miraculously "mahul" (circumcised), without the need for a surgical act.

Avraham's son Yitzchak experienced a rather 'conventional'

brit on the eighth day of his life according to the standard halachic requirements.

In contrast to the above, the brit of father Avraham was neither miraculous nor conventional, but rather a painful and even life-threatening procedure that occurred when Avraham was at the advanced age of 99 years old. In parashat Vayeira, HaShem even appears to Avraham on the most painful third day of the brit. Hence, the verse records the three covenants (britot) in the order of their desirability – the miraculous of Ya'akov, the conventional of Yitzchak, and last, the one of Avraham beset with great difficulties and physical pain.

The verse ends with a reference to the “land” (“and I shall remember the land”) which will be similar to the three ‘britot’ of our forefathers, as follows:

The Jews entered Eretz Yisrael three times as a nation.

1. The first was under the leadership of Yehoshua bin Nun, which transpired through miracles – the crossing of the Jordan River, the victory at Yericho, and subsequent miraculous victories over the following seven years. This entrance to the holy land was parallel to the miraculous covenant of Ya'akov as stated above.
2. The next time we entered the land was seventy years after the destruction of the First Temple with Ezra and Nechemia who built the Second Temple. This was not a period of miracles, since our return was ratified and endorsed and even initiated internationally through a charter granted to the Jewish nation by Cyrus, King of Persia. This parallels the covenant of Yitzchak, which was performed in the conventional manner.
3. The third time we returned to Eretz Yisrael is the current historical period, paralleling the covenant with Avraham. He was advanced in years, and we too are an ancient people. It was a very painful experience for Avraham, and our return today is beset with strife and

pain.

After 2000 years of wandering in the galut, and after the crucible of the Shoah, and 75 years of statehood, and many wars, one could hope for serenity and peace within Jewish life. However, it appears that HaShem's agenda for our nation does not stop with a thin strip of land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.

The destiny of our nation – the only real “manifest destiny” which has ever existed – is the re-establishment of a Torah society within the borders stated in the Torah from the Euphrates to the Nile. A society governed by Halacha under the Sanhedrin whose seat will be in the Bet Hamikdash, where kohanim and levi'im will serve and the Davidic monarchy is restored.

In such a pure Jewish society, there will be no place for a foreign people who claim ownership or even partnership in the Holy Land.

To return to our original question on the verse in Yeshayahu 66:

וְכַדְּמָה אִמִּי יִנְחָמְךָ כֵּן יִנְחָמְךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם :
כִּי אָמַרְתָּ אֲנִי מִדְּבָרָא וְלֹא עָשִׂיתִי
וְכִי אָמַרְתָּ אֲנִי מִדְּבָרָא וְלֹא עָשִׂיתִי

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

The Navi (prophet) cites the word ‘comfort’ three times in one verse. What are the differences between these three historical episodes of redemption and comfort, and when did they occur?

Answers: The first “comfort” was when the Jewish nation, led by Yehoshua, entered the land accompanied with fantastic miracles, paralleling the ‘brit’ of Ya’akov.

The second 'comfort' was when we returned to the land with Ezra the Scribe to rebuild the second Bet Hamikdash and by permission of two Persian kings, Cyrus and Darius II (Queen Esther's son), paralleling the brit of Yitzchak.

The third 'comfort' parallels Avraham's brit. We are an ancient people, and after 2000 years of exile to all the world's latitudes and longitudes, we returned home. Despite the fact that we are still struggling to establish our presence here, we are comforted with the knowledge that we are again sovereign over Yerushalayim for the first time in over 2000 years. It is as the Navi Yeshayahu said, "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

Presently, secular media headlines appear in bold red ink; and leftist demonstrators put no limits on their anarchistic conduct, because they are incapable of perceiving HaShem's intervention in our daily lives. In contrast, HaShem is present in stillness and serenity, as the pasuk (Melachim 1 19:11-12) relates when Eliyahu was on Mount Sinai:

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He (HaShem) said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before Me, for I am about to pass". Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before HaShem, but He was not in the wind, and after the wind a tremor, but He was not in the tremor, and after the tremor a fire, but HaShem was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheer silence...

And then HaShem spoke to Eliyahu from out of the silence.

HaShem has restored us to our Holy Land never to be in galut again. And He will comfort us... "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem".

In this auspicious week, have a meaningful Day of Remembrance for our holy soldiers who through their sacrifices enable us to live here. And a meaningful Yom Ha'atzmaut for which we have waited 2000 years.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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