

The *Shabbat* after *Tisha B'Av* is commonly known as "*Shabbat Nachamu*," after the first two words of the *Haftarah*, "*Nachamu, nachamu*" / "Comfort, comfort, my nation!" R' Mordechai Greenberg *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* emeritus of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh in Israel) asks: What does it mean to be comforted twice? Once a person has been consoled, he does not need additional consolation.

R' Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter *z"l* (1847-1905; second *Gerrer Rebbe*) writes in a different context: When all of *Hashem's* promises have been fulfilled, we will understand in retrospect how everything that happened was for the best, though right now we cannot begin to imagine how that can be so. This is why *Hashem* is referred to as the "*Ba'al Ha'nechamot*" / "Master of Consolations." When one human comforts another, he can help the person move forward, but he cannot cure the pain of the past. *Hashem*, however, can turn pain into goodness though, as mentioned, we cannot fathom now how that can be true. (*Sefat Emet: Vayeitzei* 5658)

R' Greenberg continues: This is what it means that *Hashem* will comfort us twice. Not only will He show us that everything will be good, He also will show us that everything was good.

The person who exemplified this viewpoint was Rabbi Akiva, R' Greenberg notes. He was the one who was known to say, "Everything *Hashem* does is for good." He is also the one who laughed when he saw a fox in the ruins of the *Bet Hamikdash*, because it reassured him that just as the Temple was destroyed, so its rebuilding is already in the works, hidden as it may be. And, he is the one who was able to rejoice when he made the ultimate sacrifice alluded to in our *Parashah* (6:5), "You shall love *Hashem*, your *Elokim* . . . with all your soul"--even if He takes your soul. (*Mi'darchei Ha'kerem* II p.309)

Shabbat Nachamu

R' Yosef Yozpa Han Norlingen *z"l* (1570-1637; Frankfurt, Germany) writes: It is customary to recite extra *Piyutim* / liturgic poems on this *Shabbat* and to sing more than usual, and also to enjoy more *Oneg* / pleasures on this *Shabbat* than is usual. (*Yosef Ometz* #894)

R' Yehoshua ibn Shuiv *z"l* (Spain; early 14th century) writes that the *Shabbat* after *Tisha B'Av* is "like" a *Yom Tov* / festival. Even though it is not literally a *Yom Tov*, he explains, it is observed as a holy day because it sometimes corresponds with *Tu B'Av*, the fifteenth day of this month, which the *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 26b) identifies as one of the most joyous days on the Jewish calendar. (This year is such a year, for this *Shabbat* is *Tu B'Av*, and so was the year when R' ibn Shuiv gave the *Derashah* quoted here.)

The *Gemara* describes a custom whereby eligible girls would dance in the vineyards on *Tu B'Av* and *Yom Kippur*, and young men would choose wives from among them. R' ibn Shuiv writes: This teaches us that those generations were extremely holy and pure, and that young men had no licentious thoughts. Rather, they did this solely to marry in furtherance of their service of G-d--almost like Adam and his wife before their sin.

Regarding the opening words of the *Haftarah*, R' ibn Shuiv notes that one would have expected it to say, "*Hitnachamu*" / "Be comforted . . ."--i.e., *Hashem* is telling us to be comforted. However, the use of the word "*Nachamu*" / "Comfort," and its repetition, alludes to the fact *Hashem* also needs to be comforted, for when we sin and bring suffering upon ourselves, He suffers with us, so-to-speak. Thus, "*Nachamu, nachamu*" is an instruction to the prophet: "Comfort Me! Comfort My people!"

R' ibn Shuiv concludes: Whoever rejoices on this day will merit to be consoled with the rebuilding of the *Bet Hamikdash*.

(*Derashot R"Y ibn Shuiv*)

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(*Yisroel Moshe ben Yosef a"h* - 20 Av)

"You shall do what is *Yashar* / upright and *Tov* / good in the eyes of *Hashem*." (6:18)

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) writes: This is a very important concept, for it is impossible for the Torah to catalog all the interactions that a person has with his neighbors and friends, all his business dealings, and everything that it takes to run a society. Therefore, after giving many examples--such as, "You shall not be a gossip-monger" (*Vayikra* 19:16); "You shall not take revenge or bear a grudge" (19:18); "You shall not stand by while your fellow's blood is shed" (19:16); "You shall not curse the deaf" (19:14); "In the presence of an old person you shall rise" (19:32); and similar commandments--the Torah summarizes and says that, as a general rule, you shall do what is *Tov* and *Yashar*. This includes such things as the law of *Bar Meitzra*--i.e., that, in certain circumstances, a neighbor has a right of first refusal to buy a property that is for sale, and it includes speaking pleasantly to every person--so that in all circumstances one will be called wholesome and upright.

(*Peirush Ha'Ramban Al Ha'Torah*)

R' Yehuda Amital z"l (1924-2010; founder and co-Rosh *Yeshiva* of *Yeshivat Har Etzion*, popularly known as "Gush") elaborates: There is a widely-held belief even amongst G-d-fearing people that once the Torah has been given, we have no other source of moral obligations. A person's innate sense of right and wrong no longer has any force and effect; only the Torah matters--or so they believe.

But what then does it mean to "do what is *Yashar* and *Tov* in the eyes of *Hashem*"? While the *Shulchan Aruch* does give us some examples--for example, the law of *bar Meitzra*--our legal codes are largely silent on what our verse means. What it means, R' Amital explains, is that *Hashem* created people with consciences and a sense of right and wrong so that we can figure out on our own what is "upright and good" (building upon the explicit commandments of the Torah, as *Ramban* explains). In this way, our verse is similar to the verse (*Vayikra* 19:2), "You shall be holy"--a *Mitzvah* that the Torah does not define.

R' Amital continues: There are those who see this viewpoint as degrading to the Torah, as if it suggests that the Torah is not good enough (G-d forbid) and we need to supplement the Torah from within ourselves. But did not the same G-d who created the Torah create our consciences? R' Amital asks rhetorically.

R' Amital concludes: The Torah commands (*Devarim* 23:4-5), "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of *Hashem*, even their tenth generation shall not enter the congregation of *Hashem*, forever, because they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt." Is greeting a traveler with bread and water one of the Seven Noachide Laws? R' Amital asks. It is not, he answers. But it is "*Menschlichkeit*" / basic decency. A gentile who does not observe the Seven Noachide Laws is not precluded from converting to Judaism and marrying a Jew, but a nation that lacks basic decency is so precluded. And just as the Seven Noachide Laws did not take the place of the obligation of *Menschlichkeit* for gentiles, so the Torah does not take the place of that obligation for us.

(*Le'olam Yehei Adam* p.30-31)

"See, I have taught you *Chukim* / decrees and *Mishpatim* / ordinances, as *Hashem*, my *Elokim*, has commanded me . . . You shall safeguard and perform them, for it is your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of the peoples, who shall hear all these *Chukim* and who shall say, 'Surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation!'" (4:5-6)

Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuven Gerondi z"l (Spain; 1320-1376) asks: Why would the *Chukim* cause the gentile nations to see us as a wise people? To the contrary, *Chukim* are the commandments whose reasons are not known; often, they may seem counter-intuitive or irrational!

He explains: This verse must be read with the verse that follows it, "For which is a great nation that has an *Elokim* Who is close to it, as is *Hashem*, our *Elokim*, whenever we call to Him?" When the gentile nations recognize that we are so close to *Hashem* that He answers our prayers whenever we call to Him--when we merit that--they will ask themselves what wisdom we have that causes the Divine to cling to us, but not to them. They will see that we have *Mishpatim* / logical civil laws--but gentiles have those as well, so that cannot be what distinguishes us. They will conclude, therefore, that it is our observance of *Chukim* that makes us a unique nation that is connected to the Divine.

(*Derashot Ha'Ran* #1)

"And which is a great nation that has *Chukim* / decrees and *Mishpatim* / ordinances *Tzaddikim*, such as this entire Torah that I place before you this day?" (4:8)

R' Shlomo Goldman z"l (1869-1945; *Zvhiller Rebbe*) writes: Seemingly it would have been more correct to describe the Torah's *Chukim* and *Mishpatim* as "*Tzodkim*" / "correct" rather than "*Tzaddikim*" / "righteous." However, the Torah is hinting to another idea--that there are two types of *Tzaddikim* / righteous people. There is a *Tzaddik* who is like a "*Mishpat*," a law that has an understandable reason; so, too, this *Tzaddik*'s righteousness is in the open, and everyone can see his closeness to *Hashem*. But there is also a *Tzaddik* who is like a "*Chok*," a *Mitzvah* whose reason is hidden from us. Such a person's righteousness is hidden from general view, and he seems to be like any other person.

(*Yesod Tzaddik*)

"The seventh day is *Shabbat* to *Hashem*, your *Elokim*; you shall not do any work . . ." (5:14)

R' Yehoshua Heschel Singer z"l (1848-1925; rabbi in Buffalo, N.Y.) writes: There are those who argue that *Shabbat* is nothing more than a day of rest given to man for his own good; therefore, man should be entitled to choose whether to observe it. There obviously is more to *Shabbat* than that, for the Torah prescribes the death penalty for one who transgresses it intentionally. Moreover, if the sole purpose of *Shabbat* was to be a day of rest, why was the first *Shabbat* on the finished world's first full day of existence, before man had ever done any work?

(*Mishneh Zicharon*)