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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת ואתחנן – נחמו

נְחַמוּ נְחַמוּ עַמִּי יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. (הפטרה – ישעיה מ, א)

“Comfort, comfort My people,” says your G-d. (Haftorah – Yeshayah 40:1)

חָטְאוּ בְּכַפְלִים, דָּכְתִּיב (איכה א, ח): חָטָא חָטְאָה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם. וְלָקְוּ בְּכַפְלִים, דָּכְתִּיב (ישעיה מ, ב): כִּי לָקְחָה מִיַּד ה' כְּפָלִים בְּכָל חַטָּאתֶיהָ. וּמִתְנַחֲמִים בְּכַפְלִים, דָּכְתִּיב (ישעיה מ, א): נְחַמוּ נְחַמוּ עַמִּי יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. (איכה רבה א, נז)
They sinned doubly, as it is written: A sin did she sin, Yerushalayim (Eichah 1:8); they were punished doubly, as it is written: For she received from the hand of Hashem double for all her sins (Yeshayah 40:2); and they were comforted doubly, as it is written: Comfort, comfort My people, says your G-d (ibid. 40:1). (Midrash Eichah Rabah 1:57)

The Midrash comments that we find a double mention of various aspects of the Churban. The *possuk* regarding Klal Yisroel sinning refers to a "double sin"; they were punished with a "double punishment"; the anticipated consolation, cited in this week's *haftorah*, will be twofold. The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* brings an explanation from R' Ahron Baksht *zatzal* that clarifies the double references of sin, punishment, and consolation, and how they are interconnected.

R' Ahron explains that there are two categories of sins. The first category includes wrongdoings that are universally accepted as wrong, such as stealing and murder. These crimes are recognized as wrong even by *goyim*. The second category is *aveiros* taught in the Torah that are only considered wrong by Yidden. Accordingly, this is what the Midrash refers to as חָטְאוּ בְּכַפְלִים – sinning doubly. The Navi was lamenting how Klal Yisroel stumbled by not only committing wrongdoings that Yidden consider wrong but also by perpetrating sins recognised by all as evil.

He further explains that there are methods of punishment that are recognised by both Yidden and *goyim* as being difficult, yet some troubles are only a cause of suffering for Yidden and are meaningless for *goyim*. For instance, being exiled from one's land and being enslaved to another nation is a difficulty that all would recognise. However, being banned from learning Torah, gathering together to daven, and observing *mitzvos*, would only be painful to Yidden who suffer when they lack *ruchniyus*. As a result of Klal Yisroel's *aveiros* which were twofold, they were לָקְוּ בְּכַפְלִים – punished doubly. Klal Yisroel were punished with trials and tribulations that are universally recognised as distressing, as well as with *tzoros* unique to Klal Yisroel, such as being unable to perform *mitzvos* and learn Torah in the optimal circumstances.

The explanation above, regarding the twofold reference of sin and punishment, helps us understand the מִתְנַחֲמִים בְּכַפְלִים - dual comfort and consolation. In our *haftorah*, Hashem promises that when the *geulah* comes, it won't just be a simple salvation like the *goyim* experience. It won't only be about each person returning to their homeland and property, but something much greater. We will experience a renewal of our strong connection to Hashem through the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash and all the holiness and incredible influences it will bring.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* highlights another instance where we find this concept of being held accountable for these two categories of sin. The Gemara (*Gittin* 58a) relates an incident of R' Yehoshua ben Chananyah visiting a great city in Rome where he learns about a particularly handsome boy imprisoned. R' Yehoshua went and stood by the entrance of the prison and recited the *possuk* (*Yeshayah* 42:24): מִי נָתַן לַמְשֻׁסָּה יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַזְזִים, *Who has given Yakov over for spoil and Yisroel to plunderers?* The boy responded by completing the end of the *possuk*: וְלֹא - זֶז - חָטְאוּנוּ לוֹ, וְלֹא הִלּוּא ה', *Was it not Hashem? This is what brought about our fate. We have sinned against Him, they did not wish to go in His ways and did not listen to His Torah.* R' Yehoshua was astounded by the young child's proficiency and declared he would be a future leader in Klal Yisroel, ultimately redeeming him from captivity at great cost.

The Maharsha questions the double mention of sin in the *possuk*. What are the two things mentioned here, firstly, וְלֹא אָבוּ בְּדַרְכֵי הַלּוֹךְ, and secondly, וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּתוֹרָתוֹ. He explains that Klal Yisroel deserved a double level of suffering due to their double sin. וְלֹא אָבוּ בְּדַרְכֵי הַלּוֹךְ refers to basic moral laws that every person should understand. These are the ways of Hashem since He instilled in every human an awareness of the basic mode of behaviour. However, וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּתוֹרָתוֹ refers to *mitzvos* we have heard from Hashem, which would not have been known if not for being written in the Torah. Thus, regarding rational *mitzvos*, the Navi criticised them for "לֹא אָבוּ - not wanting" to go in His ways, something they should have done on their own accord. Yet regarding the *mitzvos* given in the Torah, the accusation was that they "לֹא שָׁמְעוּ - did not listen" to the commands they had received.

Let us take to heart the teachings of the Navi and improve our observance of both logical *mitzvos* and those given to us in the Torah. This will lead to the true fulfilment of every Yid's deepest desire, with this week's *haftorah* being brought to fruition. May we merit not only the physical redemption and safe return to Eretz Yisroel, but even more significantly, our spiritual *geulah* with the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash HaShelishi *bimherah veyameinu!*

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