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Nachamu Nachamu Ami

Rabbi Aaron Zeigler

Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis

Parashat Va'etchanan is always read on the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av. This is not by coincidence but by design and Halacha; (Shulchan Aruch, O"ch, 428:4). Obviously then, there must be some connection.

After three weeks of Aveilut and a day of fasting, we need a bit of consolation. The Haftarah clearly gives to us that with "Nachamu Nachamu Ami", a double nechama. But fact is, even the parasha also renders a nechama.

HaShem knew there would be long periods in our history that we will be without a Beit Hamikdash. A place to channel our tefillot and a place to connect with the Ribbono Shel Olam. So He presents us with two gifts, gifts that are indestructible and eternal, gifts that our enemies can never sever away from us. Those two gifts are Torah and Tefilla

The Torah as we know it, is uniquely ours. It comes with a Torah She'bal'peh, that is, the Mishna and Gemara that interprets and explains the written Torah. The Mishna and Gemara serve as books of guidance and instructions which is exclusively ours, for no nation in the world has the ability to master the fine points and insights of the Gemara (even if they use Art Scroll). It is a gift given only and exclusively to us. As the Torah states (4:6-8), "Surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation! Where do find another nation that has righteous Decrees and Laws like our Torah"? No matter where we are, the Torah we study, learn and teach, will always be with us.

And then we have Tefilla. We don't need an intermediary, or a priest. We have a direct line of communication with HaShem, wherever we are, whenever we need Him. As is written (4:7), "Where do we find another great nation like ours that has HaShem as close to it as ours, whenever we call to Him"- That's Tefilla, as we say in Ashrei, "Karov HaShem Lechol Kor'av, Lechol Asher Yikra'uhu Be'emet". With these two gifts, we are guaranteed eternal survival as a nation.

However, these two gifts were not fully functional and practical, until later, when Moshe added another component to these two gifts just before he dies. In Parashat Nitzavim, Moshe introduces a second Brit (covenant) to Bnei Yisrael, (29:9-15). Moshe gathered together every member of the Jewish people, from the most exalted to the lowliest, old and young, men and women, and initiated them for the last time into the covenant of HaShem. What was new about this covenant was the concept of *AREIVUT*, responsibility for one another, under which every Jew is obligated to help others in every way possible.

Both Torah and Tefilla require this component. An individual studying it by himself cannot master Torah. He must have a Rebbe, a Mesorah from which to draw his Torah knowledge from. And then, he needs a Chavruta, to share and teach the Torah which places him in the role of 'Rebbe'. Tefilla, in its highest form requires a minyan, a group of ten men davening together, for themselves and for others. As a matter of fact, davening for others is the greatest form of Tefilla, "Hamit'pallel Be'ad Chaveiro, Hu Ne'heh'ne Techila. Therefore, you will not find any reference in the Torah of one Jew davening for another (except for Moshe Rabbeinu davening for Klal Yisrael, or Avraham Avinu davening for others). But not one simple Jew davening for another. However, with the concept of *AREIVUT*, this has now been changed.

Let us keep that in mind, when we are living in times when our people desperately need the help of one another, for health, for parnasah, or for shidduchim. *AREEIVUT* is not just a privilege, but also a responsibility. Let us fulfill it to the best of our ability so we will be matzliach in our Torah and Tefilla.

Shabbat Shalom