

Nachamu Nachamu Ami: Consolation Doubled

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The medrash states:

They sinned doubly as it states "a sin was sinned by Jerusalem." They were punished doubly as it states "For she was punished by the hand of Hashem double for her sins." We will be comforted doubly [as it states] "Comfort, comfort, my people."

Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshaya 445

חטאו בכפלים חטא חטאה ירושלים, ולקו בכפלים כי לקתה מיד ה' כפלים בכל חטאתיה, ומתנחמים בכפלים נחמו נחמו עמי.

ילקוט שמעוני, ישעיה תמה

One can sin grievously, greatly, horrendously. What is meant to sin "doubly"? One can be in great need of consolation after experiencing a great tragedy but what is meant by a "consolation-doubly"?

The medrash states:

R. Huna and R. Yirmiyah said in the name of R. Shmuel b. R. Yitzchak: We find that the Holy One Blessed be He ignored the sins of idol worship, incest and murder, but did not ignore the despising of Torah ... R. Huna and R. Yirmiyah said in the name of R. Chiya: the verse states "You abandoned Me and did not observe My Torah." If only you would have just abandoned Me but observed my Torah. Through your engagement in Torah, its light would have brought you back to doing good.

Eicha Rabbah, Pesichta no. 2

ר' הונא ור' ירמיה בשם ר' שמואל ברבי יצחק אמר מצינו שויתר הקב"ה על עבודת כוכבים ועל גילוי עריות ועל שפיכות דמים ולא ויתר על מאסה של תורה ... ר' הונא ור' ירמיה בשם ר' חייא בר אבא אמרי כתיב ואותי עזבו ואת תורת לא שמרו, הלואי אותי עזבו ותורת שמרו, מתוך שהיו מתעסקין בה המאור שבה היה מחזירן למוטב.

איכה רבה, פתיחתא ב

Hashem would not have imposed the punishment of exile for the sins of idolatry, adultery and murder if the Jews did not neglect the study of His Torah. If they would have studied Torah, the light of Torah would have brought them back to observance of His commandments.

This enigmatic medrash is elucidated by the following medrash:

There were 365 houses of idol worship in Damascus and each was used for worship one day [a year]. When that worship house had its day, everyone would worship there that day ... R. Yosi b. R. Chanina said: [Hashem said]: If only My children would have worshipped me as a dessert that comes at the end [of the meal].

Eicha Rabbah, Pesichta no. 10

שלש מאות וששים וחמשה בתי עבודת כוכבים היו בדמשק וכל אחת ואחת היו עובדין אותה יום אחד והיה להם יום אחד והיו כולן עובדין באותו היום ... א"ר יוסי בר' חנינא הלואי עשו אותי בני כגרזימי הזו שהיא באה באחרונה.

איכה רבה, פתיחתא י

The sin of *mo'asah shel Torah*—despising Hashem's Torah—could not be forgiven. All days of the year assigned to other faiths—no day for Torah! They would not let Torah values compete with other value systems. They would not allow an even playing field.

Deja vu! The universities of America (and elsewhere), captive to the Secular Left faculty and administration, do not allow the voice of Torah Judaism on their campuses. They reject and delegitimize the State of Israel because of its historic association with the Torah of the Nation of Israel and the values it represents. They are offended by the Torah's rejection of the "god" of autonomy that they worship. Hashem has "no day" on their campuses.

Chatu B'kiflayim—The "Doubled Sin"—The sin had two distinct qualities. First, it was a rejection of the discipline, beauty, majesty of a life in accordance with mitzvos Hashem. Second, there was a sin in substituting the god of autonomy with the Creator, the author of our Torah. They established a religion of hedonism without good and evil; sin and mitzva; right and wrong. Whatever one does is right if it does not conflict with the right of others.

Laku B'kiflayim—The "Double Punishment"—We were punished in two different ways. First, we were denigrated from our status as a Holy Nation and from G-d and exiled from our land. Second, nations of the world denied our humanity. They did (and some still do) dehumanize us. We were not treated as a conquered nation but degraded to the level of animals.

Nechama B'kiflayim—The "Doubled Consolation"—True consolation requires a reversal of the process that resulted in our 2,000 years of Exile. We were not allowed to have our own values system compete; we must now compete for the hearts and minds of world Jewry. Our estranged brethren, who proudly identify themselves as Jewish but without commitment to the Jewish religion, must be challenged with utilitarian statistics. Whatever criteria one chooses to evaluate success—personal, familial, national—our Torah-committed lifestyle is highly competitive and ready for any challenge.

Recently, economists have added "contentment" as a critical value in comparing societies along with gross national product. Our challenge to world Jewry is: compare on the "contentment scale" family interactions, institutions of educations and welfare of those who live by Torah values and those who don't. The Torah has a system that provides contentment, fulfills our aspirations for the nationhood of world Jewry, and our duties to contribute to world society. Its splendor can bring contentment in ways that other systems and belief cannot. Hashem presents this very challenge at the end of the "double consolation" prophecy:

To whom will you compare Me to, that I should be equal, says the Holy One.

Yeshaya 40:25

וְאֵל-מִי תִדְמִיּוּנִי, וְאֲשֶׁרֶה יֹאמֶר,
קְדוֹשׁ.
יִשְׁעִיָּה מִ:כֶּה

We should be eager to present the challenge: Compare and you will return to the ways of Hashem.