



5782 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Vaetchanan / פרשת ואֶתְחַנֵּן

The All-Inclusive Redemption

This week is known as Shabbat Nachamu, when we read the beautiful haftarah of consolation. As usual, it is also parshat Va'etchanan. In what way is this week's Torah portion connected with the theme of consolation and redemption?

Rabbi Pinchas Friedman offers the following explanation.¹ A highlight of the parsha is the foundational verse: "Hear Israel: God is our Lord, God is one." While this verse is clearly a call to the Jewish people to believe in the one true God, the Talmud records that an earlier iteration of the same statement was actually made to the person "Yisrael" or Yaakov Avinu.² When our forefather was on his deathbed he was concerned that one of his children was secretly not following the path of Judaism. In response, his children all responded in unison with the statement of Shema, demonstrating that they were all following the path that he had taught them.

This is particularly meaningful since immediately following this episode, Yaakov blesses each of his sons with a unique blessing. Yaakov realized that each child had different proclivities, talents and interest and blessed them accordingly. Yissachar, who was involved in the world of Torah study, was different from Zevulun who was interested in business, who was yet different from Yehuda who acted as a natural leader. Yet, this is all preceded by a statement of unity and a joint belief in the one God. Each person can act as an individual and relate to the same God in different ways.

This is also a theme of the ultimate return of the Jewish people to Yerushalayim. The name "Yerushalayim" partially stems from the word "Shalem" or completion/perfection. This state of

¹ This is part of Rabbi Friedman's explanation, as relayed by Rabbi Baruch Simon, available at <https://www.yutorah.org/sidebar/lecture.cfm/747607/rabbi-baruch-simon/ish-lo-ne-edar-nechmas-zion-u-binyan-yerushalayim/>.

² Pesachim 56a.



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“sheleimut” is when everyone is included and are able to use their talents in their own unique way for the goal of building the Jewish people and connecting with God.

This idea appears directly in our haftorah as well. The concluding verse in the haftorah is God speaking about the stars: “Lift high your eyes and see: Who created these? He who sends out their host by count, Who calls them each by name: Because of His great might and vast power, Not one fails to appear.”³ God brings out each of the myriads of stars every night.

Rabbeinu Bachya, in his Kad HaKemach,⁴ offers an additional interpretation. He says that the stars in this verse are “a hint to the Jewish people who are compared to the stars, meaning that they will all ascend to Yerushalayim each, with his own name... [and that] not one of the Jews alive at that time will be missing.” The Jewish people in Yerushalayaim will be as stars: each unique but all together and unified. This reality will complete the circle began so many years before at Yaakov’s deathbed and bring true redemption to the world.

³ Yeshayahu 40:26. Translation from sefaria.org.il.

⁴ Kad HaKemach, “Nachamu.”