

Strength Trust Hope And Healing

The Haftora¹ for parshas Bechukosai (and Behar-Bechukosai when they are together), is from the book of Yirmyahu. In it you will find a prayer, prophecy, words of rebuke and warning about not putting our trust in Hashem and not keeping the sabbatical years. But you also find words of hope, trust in Hashem, and healing.

The connection to our parsha(s), is that Bechukosai (and Behar-Bechukosai) speaks of the sabbatical year, that we can trust that Hashem will provide for us in the years that our fields lay fallow. Blessing will be showered upon us for trusting in Hashem and keeping the sabbatical years, and punishment for not keeping them.

The Haftora begins with Yirmyahu saying, "Hashem is my strength and my stronghold, and my refuge in times of trouble."² The opening words of the Haftora, in essence, is the central message of the Haftora. Hashem is always there for us, especially in times of trouble, all we need to do, is trust in Him.

Of course the consequences for not trusting in Hashem is clearly defined in the Haftora. When we put our trust in people or in ourselves, thinking that it is my abilities and strength that will take care of me, and we forget that everything we have and will have is from Hashem, we will inevitably fail.

The Haftora describes this with the words, "Cursed is the man (gever), who puts his trust in man (adam), relying on (mortal) flesh for strength, and turns his heart away from Hashem."³ The basic meaning of the verse is understood, that putting our trust in man is futile. But why does the verse use two different names, geveer and adam, to say "man?"

Geveer refers to physical and emotional strength of man. Adam refers to the intelligent and spiritual makeup of man.

The verse is telling us a deeper message here. When someone thinks that his geveer, his emotional strength, comes from his "adam," his intellect and because he has a great soul. It becomes a slippery slope. Eventually he will be "relying on flesh for strength," meaning, that he will convince himself that his emotional strength comes because he has a highly refined body. He thinks so highly of his body and soul, that he doesn't think that he needs to work on himself. He becomes locked in his ego, and he "turns his heart away from Hashem."⁴

This teaches us that even one who is learned and at a high spiritual level has to continue working on himself to get closer to Hashem.

When he thinks that he has reached the top and he doesn't have to work on himself anymore, he is locking himself away from Hashem, and he is alone by his own doing.

The Haftora continues, "Blessed is the man who puts his trust in Hashem, and Hashem will be his trustee. And he will be like a tree planted by the water, who sends its roots into the rivulet, it is not affected when the heat comes and its leaves remain green, it doesn't worry in a year of famine, and it doesn't stop producing fruit."⁵

The contrast here is clear, putting our trust in Hashem and recognizing that it is all from Him, is a path to continuous growth and blessing in our lives.

The Haftora continues to say that it is silly to think, "who will know"⁶ where my trust is? Hashem knows! Or to be dishonest, because it will be found out, you will lose the dishonest gain and "you will be (exposed) as a scoundrel."⁷

Now the Haftora concludes, "Hashem is Israel's hope, all who abandon You will be ashamed, those who turn away from Me will be inscribed into the earth, because they abandoned the source of living

¹ Jeremiah 16:19-17:14.

² Jeremiah 16:19-.

³ Jeremiah 17:5.

⁴ Sichos Kodesh 5710-5711 pp. 221-222.

⁵ Jeremiah 17:7-8.

⁶ Jeremiah 17:9.

⁷ Jeremiah 17:10.

waters, Havaya (Hashem). Heal me and I will heal, save me and I will be saved, because You are my praise."⁸

Why does it call our connection with Hashem, the source of living waters? How does the second verse about healing and saving fit in? Why the double expression, heal me and I will heal, save me and I will be saved? How do the words "because you are my praise" fit in this verse?

We have to realize that Hashem is our hope, and when we forget that, it is separating ourselves from the source of living waters, which is a spiritual illness. That is where the second verse comes in, it is explaining the process of healing this spiritual illness through Teshuva.

First, we have to understand what the illness is and then it can be healed. The illness is understood through the metaphor of "abandoning the source of living waters."

Living waters is another name for a natural spring of fresh water. Spring water goes through three stages after it comes out of its source. The first stage is flowing down the stream or river to the sea. In this stage the water is revealed. In the second stage the water flows underground in various channels making its way to the spring. In this stage the water is hidden. The final stage is when it breaks out of the ground, again revealed. These three stages signify the stages of Hashem's creative energy coming into the world, from his name Havaya, the source.

The first kind of existence is in the spiritual realm know in Kabbalistic teaching as the world of Briya (Creation). Being that it is the first step of creation ex nihilo (from nothing to something), it is full of G-dliness, therefore, the existence isn't a complete existence. The angels of the world of Briya, called Serafim, are angels of great wisdom. Since they experience their source, Havaya, they are totally nullified in His presence. They therefore say, "Holy

holy holy Havaya of hosts."⁹ They also understand that our part is the most important, as we fill the world with G-dliness by learning Torah and doing mitzvahs. And so they say, "the whole Earth is full of His glory."¹⁰ Since Briya is filled with G-dliness, the experience in that world is a revealed one, just like the river going to the sea.

The second realm is the world of Yetzira (Formation). In this world the existence is a total existence, it doesn't experience Havaya, because it is creating something from something. Its source is totally hidden, therefore the experience in the world of Yetzira is hidden.

The final realm is where we are, the world of Assiya (Action). As mentioned earlier, our job is to reveal G-dliness down here through learning Torah and doing mitzvahs. The revelation that we can accomplish is far greater than the world of Briya, because mitzvahs are rooted in a higher place, in the source itself, prior to Briya, in Hashem's essence. So the experience in Assiya, is of the essence of Havaya breaking out and being revealed in the world.

By studying Torah and doing mitzvahs, we are not only drawing living waters, but we are drawing from the source of living waters, Hashem's essence prior to existence. And we fill the world with this great revelation, greater than any angel could.

When a Jewish person has fallen to a spiritual low, where he is not learning Torah and doing mitzvahs, he has abandoned the source of living waters. He is spiritually ill.

How does he become healed? Hashem takes the first step, "Heal me Hashem," an inspiration from above. Now that he is inspired, his job is to do Teshuva from his own effort, "and I will heal." And in this way he reconnects with the source.¹¹

⁹ Isaiah 6:3.

¹⁰ Isaiah 6:3.

¹¹ Save me and I will be saved, " is the same idea but the inspiration from Hashem is from a higher level (A"K).

⁸ Jeremiah 17:13-14.

How far will this connection go? That is where the praise comes in. Praise is an amazing thing. When you praise someone, you bring out strengths and abilities in that person, that are hidden inside, that he never knew he had. Praise is even more powerful, it could bring new strengths and abilities which are beyond the person being praised. By praising Hashem, we are able to draw G-dliness from a place beyond our abilities. Not only do we reconnect, but we connect deeper than we could have imagined.¹²

Writing this article was very meaningful to me, because it is about Hashem being our strength and refuge, and it is about trust, hope in Hashem and healing. Somehow, writing about these things strengthens these ideas in me and I am grateful.

By putting our hope and trust in Hashem, He becomes our strength, our refuge, and the One we can rely on. We bring blessing in our lives and spiritual healing, which brings physical healing beyond anything we could imagine.

May we all find the strength to weather this exile and overcome every challenge, knowing that Hashem is always with us. And may we merit the coming of Moshiach soon. The time has come.

¹² Torahs Menachem Hisvaduyos volume 30 5721b pp. 302-311.