



A Double Comfort

“The Jewish people sinned doubly, as it says, ‘the people of Yerushalayim sinned a sin’ (Eicha 1:8). And they were punished doubly, as it says, ‘She has been smitten doubly by the hand of G-d for all her sins’ (Yeshayahu 40:2). And they will be comforted doubly, as it says, ‘Be comforted, be comforted, My nation’ (ibid.)”

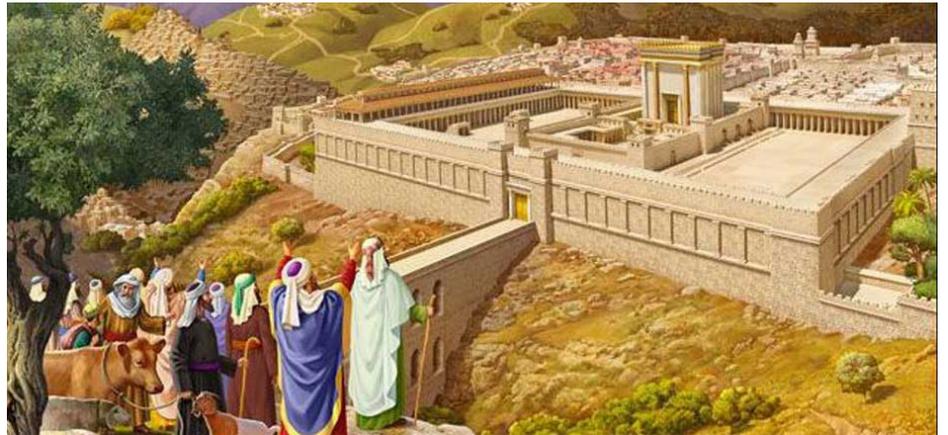
Eicha Rabbah 1:65

It is difficult to explain this doubling of the punishment literally or quantitatively. If the Jews sinned doubly, then the punishment commensurate to double sin is not double but equal to the sin, and a comfort for a double punishment is not double but equal to it.

The *Navi* says, “My nation has done two evils: they have forsaken Me, the Source of living water, to dig wells that produced no water” (Yirmiyahu 2:13). In addition to the sin itself, a result of desire and emotion, of impulse, *Am Yisrael* also formulated philosophies to justify their sins intellectually and lull them into thinking that the evils they were perpetuating were actually virtuous. They devised systems of values foreign to the Torah and put their trust in a multitude of isms that served as the false gods to which they dedicated their lives.

In response to this dual sin, G-d punished the Jews in kind. To punish the actual acts of transgression, He brought calamities and tragedies upon them to show them how they were destroying their spiritual essence. To address the second aspect of the sin, the fact they had distanced themselves from G-d by creating philosophies to justify their sins, G-d brought these calamities in a manner of *hester panim*, in a way that made it appear He had abandoned them.

In this manner, G-d sought to teach the Jews how disastrous the world can be if one removes Divine Providence from one's world perspective and substitutes other



causes. G-d sought to lead them into recognizing that the political movements, the secular ethical philosophies or economic systems and isms they had devised and believed in could not bring them the benefits they had anticipated. And it would be from a world that appeared bereft of all rhyme and reason that they would now have to seek out G-d's face in rediscovery.

In the future, G-d will direct world events to show us clearly that all the things we put our trust into (in place of Him) are useless and cannot be relied on. We will come to the realization that we have no one to rely on other than our Father in Heaven. Ultimately, when we choose G-d, He will comfort us once again and thus compensate for the dual nature of our punishments. This is the double comfort described in the Midrash: to compensate for the calamities and physical suffering, the joy and serenity of the Messianic era will bring an end to our suffering in pain. To compensate for the punishment of *hester panim*, He will additionally comfort us by clarifying that all the punishments we received were His doing and for our ultimate benefit. “*Anochi, Anochi*; It is I, yes, I, who comforts you” (Yeshayahu 51:12), says the verse. The *Anochi* who reveals Himself now is now the same *Anochi* who directed all the prior events.

This is why we shift immediately from the intense mourning of Tisha B'Av to

the intense comfort and joy of *Shabbat Nachamu*, which Rabbi Yehoshua ibn Shuiv writes is to be celebrated with the joy of a *yom tov*. Mourning usually requires a long transitional period while the sense of bereavement gradually lessens. The intense mourning of Tisha B'Av leads directly and swiftly into the joy and comfort of *Shabbat Nachamu*. There is no gradual abatement of the grieving process. This is because, as our Sages tell us, “Whoever mourns Yerushalayim merits to see its joy.” Mourning over Yerushalayim's desolation properly – and understanding the dynamics of what caused the destruction and why G-d dealt with us with *hester panim* – ultimately offers us double comfort.

Through our mourning, we see and understand the entire process. This is hinted at in the fact that the Torah reading of Tisha B'Av, כִּי תוֹלִיד בְּנִים, is from *Parashat VaEtchanan*, which is also always read on *Shabbat Nachamu*. We have to once again learn the parasha of Tisha B'Av, but in a different light – a light that brings us comfort and joy.

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