

## נְחֵמוּ נְחֵמוּ עַמִּי יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהִים

This week's *haftarah*, the first of seven which comfort us *after Tisha B'Av*, opens with the sentence, "Be comforted, be comforted, oh my nation. Speak to the heart of *Yerushalayim* and call to her (encourage her) since she was punished doubly for her sins." The *Midrash (Eicha ch. 1)* notes that *Yerusahalayim* is consoled doubly to compensate for her being punished doubly.

This *Midrash* is not just a play on words. *Rav Chayim Shmuelevitz ז"ל (Rosh Yeshiva in Mir, Poland and Yerushalayim, 1902-1979)* explains that once the redemption comes, we will be consoled doubly because we will be able to understand that the redemption was actually staged in the very worst of times. The seeds of redemption are sown when we are at our lowest ebb. This is the meaning of the well-known *gemara* that teaches that *Mashiach* was born at the time of the destruction.

*Reb Chaim* also quotes the *gemara* at the end of *Makkos* which related an incident in which *Rabbi Akiva* and his colleagues passed the ruins of the *Bais HaMikdash* and saw a fox exiting the place where the holy of holies had stood. *Rabbi Akiva's* friends began to weep in response to the terrible desolation and desecration they were witnessing. *Rabbi Akiva* was smiling, and when he was asked for an explanation, he said that the same prophet who said that Zion would be ploughed over because of our sins also said that old hoary men and women, each one holding their staff, will yet again sit in the streets of *Yershalayim*. Now, that we witnessed the fulfillment of the first part of this prophecy, we can surely anticipate the second part. How did this answer assuage the pain of the destruction?

*Rav Chaim* explains that the reconstructed *Bais HaMikdash* and the restoration of our people to our land are going to be on a much higher level of existence than we had in the past. The staffs held by the old people described in the prophecy symbolize abilities that far surpass what old people can do today. The destruction paved the way for this new existence and that is part of the consolation for our people. While the pain for our people is very real and justified, it is still mitigated with the knowledge that it isn't for naught. It is purposeful and it lays the foundation for a brighter future.

The Jewish people have always overcome their generation's adversity with the belief that tomorrow will be better. That isn't enough. We must not only have faith in *Hashem* that he is just and kind. We must also have trust in his judgment. We must believe that he is always creating a brighter future with today's events. We will be able to fully understand this at the time of redemption when the world will reach a perfect state, and we will have the double consolation of being redeemed and knowing that our troubles were actually for our own good.