

Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778 Parashat Pinchas / פרשת פינחס

A Hopeful Mourning

The first haftorah of the three weeks is the inaugural prophecy of Yirmiyahu. This is fitting. Yirmiyahu is popularly known as the prophet of misfortune and doom and the majority of his book predicts the destruction of the kingdom of Yehudah and the *Beit HaMikdash*. It seems proper, then, that he is the one who opens this time period of mourning.

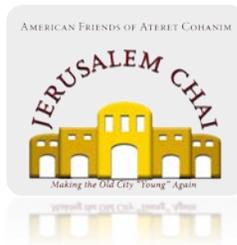
However, it is interesting to note that despite the dark nature of much of this week's haftorah, it actually begins on a very positive and encouraging note. God chooses Yirmiyahu as a prophet and he protests that he is but a child. God's response is mesmerizing:¹

Say not, "I am a youth," for wherever I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Fear them not, for I am with you to save you, says the Lord... Behold, I have appointed you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to uproot and to crush, and to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant.

God promises Yirmiyahu that no matter what occurs in the future and no matter how hard his task, God will always be at his side. Indeed, Yirmiyahu stands up to false prophets and kings alike and is a most unpopular figure in Judea. However, God never lets Yirmiyahu down and He accompanies him throughout his journeys.

This opening of the book of Yirmiyahu can be a metaphor for our long exile. Our exile has been harsh, filled with trials and tribulations, and unfortunately much suffering and loss of life. Other nations would have bowed their heads in defeat. However, we succeeded in traversing the long exile due to the note of hope that preceded it. As many midrashim explain, God promised the Jewish people that He would descend into exile with the Jewish people and be there throughout their

¹ Yirmiyahu 1:7-10.



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suffering.² It was God's fulfillment of this promise that gave us the hope and support necessary to continue our journey back home.

Similar to the Jewish people, Yerushalayim has seen its series of misfortunes. A constant battle field between warring foreigners, while its natural inhabitants are mainly thousands of miles away, the metaphoric city has had a long and tiring exile. However, similar to Yirmiyah and the Jewish people, God promised that no matter the current occupants, His Shekhina would never leave the city's environs.³

Just as these hopeful promises gave Yirmiyahu, the Jewish people and Yerushalayim the strength to carry on, they should boost our confidence as well. Thank God, we are living the beginning of the fulfillment of God's ultimate promise of reuniting Himself, the Jewish people and Yerushalayim. While we mourn for what we lost, let us remain positive and hopeful for a swift and speedy completion of the redemption.

² See, for example, Mechilta, Sefer Shirah, parsha 3.

³ See, Rambam, Hilchot Beit HaBechira 6:16; Shemot Rabbah 2:2.