



5779 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein
Parashat Vaetchanan / פרשת ואתחנן / Shabbat Nachamu / שבת נחמו

The Binding Center

Our haftorah begins with God's call to the prophets to comfort the Jewish people: "'Console, console My people," says your God.¹ The opening words depict a sense of multiplicity. God speaks in plural to multiple prophets and employs a double language – "Console, console" – in his instructions, seemingly implying a multiplicity of messages. At first glance this might be surprising as God's message of consolation is simple and straightforward and one would think that a single messenger with a single message would suffice.

However, God's wisdom and sensitivity to his suffering people are demonstrated by this multiplicity. God's ultimate goal is to console the people. We know that the Torah recognizes and celebrates the diversity that exists in humanity at large and the Jewish people in particular. "Just as their faces are different, so, too are their minds different."² Also, since the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, each group of Jews has experienced a different facet of the exile and a different form of suffering. Thus, multiple prophets need to each speaking "in their own unique style" in order to truly console the people.

This picture of multiplicity and diversity must be contrasted with God's next words: "Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim and call to her." The many prophets, all speaking in their own manner to the diverse experiences of the Jews in exile must all begin by speaking to (or about) a single item - the heart of Yerushalayim. What is the meaning of this dichotomy? Why begin diverse messaging with a single item?

The Navi seems to be teaching us a powerful lesson. Diversity within the Jewish people with each community having its own flavor and texture is something to be embraced. Each community can have their own "prophet" and own slightly different message. However, this can only exist if

¹ Yeshayahu 40:1.

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everyone is deeply connected to the central heart of the Jewish people and their history – the heart of Yerushalayim. That is the root and the epicenter of the Jewish people which binds them all together.

Similar to a heart, Yerushalayim is the life-giving-force that pumps out vitality to the entire body. The experience of the head might be very different than that of the foot, but they are all dependent on the heart for their life and intermeshed through the heart. Similarly, at the time of redemption, when God wants to redeem and comfort all parts of the Jewish people, the message begins with affirming the underlying unity that exists amongst all Jews – we are all dependent and part of the heart of Yerushalayim. Only after we understand this basic element of our identity can each community receive the custom-tailored message that is most suited for itself.