

Parshat Ki Tavo, *Ma Nishma*, Leffell School Newsletter

Sometimes, a *miracle* is just a change in perspective. In our darkest moments, we may struggle to stay optimistic, but then suddenly, we get a glimmer of hope; we feel that “this, too, shall pass,” or “better days are ahead.” Just the difference in mindset can transform even the most difficult life challenges into powerful spiritual lessons or, at least, more manageable experiences.

But what accounts for this miraculous shift? How can we access this kind of faith when we need it? Our readings this week suggest that the change in mindset is not always in our hands. Look at the difference between the extended *tochecha* (rebuke) in Parshat Ki Tavo and the soothing words of our Haftarah, Isaiah chapter 60. Among the curses that Moses lists towards the end of Deuteronomy (often read publicly in hushed tones), the Torah offers one of the most terrifying possibilities as a punishment for betraying God: that we will never be comfortable at any moment in time. The timing will always feel wrong.

סז בַּבֹּקֶר תֹּאמַר מִי-יָתֵן עֶרֶב, וּבָעֶרֶב תֹּאמַר מִי-יָתֵן בֹּקֶר

In the morning, you will say “if it were only evening!” and in the evening, you will say “if it were only morning!” (Deuteronomy 29: 67)

As curses go, few things are as scary as the feeling of hopelessness. At every moment, in this vision, we will wish things were different. We will never be able to sit with the present, and we will always feel that life would be better at another moment.

What a relief that our Haftarah offers another way. In the sixth Haftarah of consolation—in the emotional climb from Tisha B’Av to Rosh Hashanah—Isaiah reminds us that the light will arise again.

קוּמִי אוֹרִי, כִּי בָא אוֹרְךָ

Arise, shine, for your light has come. (Isaiah 60:1)

It will not always be dark, teaches Isaiah. Lighter days are ahead. But in a difficult moment, we can’t help ourselves; *when will the light come*, we might ask? How long must we wait to feel the comfort and consolation promised?

The Haftarah ends with an answer which is meant to comfort us: *when God is ready*.

אָנֹכִי ה', בְּעֵתָהּ אַחֲשִׁינָהּ.

(I, God, will hasten it in its time. (Isaiah 60:22)

“Leave it in My hands,” God tells us. “It’s on My schedule.”

Life’s biggest moments happen on God’s time, not ours. And the prophet reminds us this. Hang in there, he seems to be saying, it will come. When I’m ready, God tells us through the prophet, I will make it happen.

It turns out the difference between the curses of our *parsha* and the words of comfort in Isaiah may, in fact, simply be a matter of perspective. In the curse, the timing is always wrong. We always want things to be different than they are. In the blessing, we can hang in there; we can hold out a little longer, believing that in God's time, comfort will come.

As Rosh Hashanah approaches, as we reflect on where we stand and where we are going, may we be blessed with Isaiah's perspective, remembering that life's ups and downs are not on our schedule, but they will pass. בְּעֵתָהּ אֶחֱיֶשְׁנָה. When the time is right.

May we be blessed this year with the miracle of a change in perspective, and may the light come, right when we need it most. Shabbat Shalom.