Ki Tavo

V'AF AL PI SHEYITMAHEI'AH - IM KOL ZEH ACHAKEH LO B'CHOL YOM SHEYAVO"

This week's haftara, the sixth of the seven haftarot of Nechama, is the 60th perek of Sefer Yishayahu, a chapter that, from start to finish, is one of comfort and consolation. The selection opens with the cry KUMI ORI! - calling upon Israel to "Arise and Shine", as Hashem, the source of eternal light, will illuminate them despite the darkness that surrounds them. The navi envisions a time when the gentile nations, inspired by Hashem's light, will turn to G-d, bringing sacrifices and wealth to serve Hashem and His nation. Together with that, Yishayahu promises a return of Israel from the Diaspora, with bountiful exiles filling the streets and bringing their riches and good fortune with them. No longer would Yerushalayim be forsaken and despised, says Yishayahu, instead she will be a pride and joy for all future generations. The glorious prophecy closes with the vision of Zion, blessed now with the secure of protection of the One above, Who will provide you with His eternal light and glory.

Comforting words, indeed.

But I find most interesting the very last words spoken by the navi: ANI HASHEM B'ITAH ACHISHENA - "I am Hashem; in its time, I shall hasten it!"

This statement has given rise to a number of rabbinic interpretations, the most well-known of them is found in the Talmud [Sanhedrin 98a], that G-d will hasten the geula (ACHISHENA) - but, even if Israel is not deserving of that, the redemption will still come "in its time" (B'ITAH).

I find a more meaningful message to be found in these words - a message that we have experiences during this past century. The navi is promising that B'ITAH - when the time finally comes, ACHISHENA - G-d promises that He will have the events bringing the redemption come very quickly, over only a relatively short period of time.

A truth about which we can testify.

Rav Yehuda Shavit z"l, comments that the magnificent prophecies and promises that fill this haftara could be best summarized as a fulfillment of the words we read in this week's parasha [D'varim 26: 18-19]: "Hashem
has distinguished you today to be His treasured people... and to make you supreme above other nations... for praise, renown and splendor, and to be a holy people to Hashem..."

And the final words of Yishayahu speak loudly to us as well.

How remarkable to stand today and serve as witnesses to the truth of these words - both those from the Torah and those from the navi. We have seen the miracle of return to - and survival in - our Land, in face of cruel enemies. Some may believe that we are not deserving of redemption today. But the words of the prophet say differently.

Truly, Hashem's Light shines upon us!

But what still remains, is for us to become a holy nation that G-d desired for us - and from us. A nation of success and pride but also one of justice and kindness.

The words of the navi in today's haftara gave much comfort to our people of the past generations and great encouragement for us today.

And the words of the Torah set forth the challenge that we face to truly earn the title of a "treasured nation".