

Dvar Torah by

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to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

VA'ETCHANAN-NACHAMU

NACHAMU NACHAMU... "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people saith your G-d" (Yishayahu 40).

These words are found in the beginning of our Haftora this week. That is why this Shabbat is called Shabbat Nachamu.

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni) on this pasuk says: "May it be a comfort for those above and for those below, for the living and for the deceased, for this world and the world to come." The Midrash seems to be giving over a very important message. Unless consolation or comforting is total, there is no real comfort at all. To comfort a person half-heartedly is no consolation.

In fact, another Midrash points out that when Yishayahu said the words "comfort ye, comfort ye", the Jews wanted to kill him. It is only after he completed his words with "this is what G-d says" were the people satisfied.

The Jews at the time were so distraught and in such despair that nothing short of a direct message of comfort from G-d himself would soothe their pain. Similarly, at a Shiva

home, we must be aware to say the right things to comfort the mourner. In Avot D'Rav Nissin (chapter 14) we are told that when Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai lost his son, many came to console him. Rabbi Eliezer pointed out how Adam HaRishon lost his son Abel. Others mentioned Aharon's personal tragedy of losing two children, Others mentioned Iyov's loss. Upon hearing this, Rabbi Yochanan chastised them by having to be reminded of other people's tragedies. Finally, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariya told Rabbi Yochanan through parable. "I will tell you what your situation is comparable to. It is comparable to a king who entrusts an invaluable treasure to one of his subjects. The person prays every day that all should go well so that he can return the treasure intact. The same is with your son. G-d gave you a valuable treasure to maintain, a young Torah scholar. You are fortunate indeed to have been able to return this treasure intact." Rabbi Yochanan responded, "Rav Elazar, my son, you have comforted me as a comforter should."

Rav Elazar focused on the deceased and his penetrating words offered complete comfort.

Comforting is an art; however, we hope that we will no longer need such comfort in the future, that it will become a lost art. 🏠